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[HARD VOWS.]

MY LADY'S LOVERS.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY AN EMINENT AUTHOR.

CHAPTER X.

AT HIS MERCY.

He softly breathed the most impassioned words
And felt as if Elysium had disclosed
Its glory to his eye.

LADY PEARL and Hugh Egerton had drifted far away from the world. Alone in the depths of the wood, with love to lull them for awhile into the sweet, dreamy state of the lotus eater, they forgot all else but the happiness of the hour and let the moments fly by unheeded. And if the past was forgotten in the joy of the present the future was unheeded.

Hugh had no settled plans, nothing to advance, no thought of what was to be the outcome of this blissful meeting, except a vague, shadowy something which spoke of a life that was to be all sunlight, all joy, and far away from all that had hitherto made his life so dreary.

Nor was Lady Pearl more definite in thought than her lover. It was the first time she had ever felt the warm clasp of love, or heard how the lips can speak when guided by love, and the experience was in its very freshness overpowering, intoxicating. She forgot with whom she had set forth that day, the struggle with Sir

Charles Friarly, all except that she loved Hugh Egerton and he was by her side.

But it could not go on for ever, and he awoke out of his dream as a cry like that of a startled pheasant resounded through the wood. Pearl awoke too and hid the deep roses on her cheeks upon his breast.

"Darling," said Hugh, "we must part. I cannot wrong you by lingering here. I have wronged you too much already."

"If making me happy, Hugh, is wrong," she said, "then you speak truly."

"Happy with a love like mine?" he asked, sadly.

"It is a love I can be proud of," Pearl answered.

"And proud of me?"

"Of you too."

"You do not know all," he said, with a despairing gesture. "I am bound hand and foot, locked out of the life that should be mine, debarred from the joys I long for. But there may be hope. I will try to find a glimmer of it in the darkness that is around me and I will live for you."

The cry that had startled him before was now repeated, and his brow darkened again.

"I must go," he said; "my friends are getting impatient. But we will meet again. Oh! my darling—my love! The hours that I shall know without you will be very weary. Meet me soon."

"I will meet you where you will," she answered, simply.

"I know of no place but this," he said, "and it is so far to come; you will be observed too, unless— But I shall ask too much."

"No, dear Hugh."

"Then come to-morrow as soon as you can after the sun is up. I will be here with the dawn."

"I will come, Hugh."

For the third time the cry echoed through the wood, and he drew her close to him as he kissed her on the brow, the cheek, the lips; then, whispering "To-morrow," he gently released himself from her arms and hurried away.

Lady Pearl, with the senses of a new life beating in her veins, sauntered on. She knew that her absence would excite comment among her friends, and that she was placed in a very painful position with regard to Sir Charles Friarly, who would of course, as she believed, not dare to show himself again at Dumbdikes. She had lingered behind with him, and if indeed he had departed she would be obliged to say something concerning him, and what could she say but the truth?

Her position was embarrassing, but it suddenly became alarming when the man she was thinking of emerged from behind a clump of bushes and presented himself before her.

"Do not fear me, Lady Pearl," he said, as she sprang back with a short, sharp cry of terror. "I am not likely to repeat the folly I was guilty of an hour ago."

"An hour ago?" she echoed, faintly.

"Ay, an hour," he said, coolly. "The time has flown with you, but it has lagged with me. I hope, however, nobody but myself is to blame for that. For my late conduct I have only one excuse to offer—my love."

"I beseech you not to misuse the word," said Lady Pearl, who had now recovered her wonted calmness.

They were walking on together towards the

Cells and she could hear voices not far away, so there was nothing to fear.

"Love like mine," said Sir Charles, "acts in different ways upon men—one it soothes, another it maddens; one it makes merry, in another it arouses a murderous spirit. I am not accountable for my nature, or the action of love upon me."

"I trust you will never name love to me again," said Pearl.

"After the burning words of Egerton," he said, "I can understand how flat my poor pleadings must fall upon your ear, but let us not talk of that, I have no wish to annoy you."

"Why are you here then?"

"To suggest that there should be peace between us."

"But it must be a peace that keeps us apart, Sir Charles."

"As far apart as we can be without exciting comment. Agreed. And the terms are that you shall keep secret the mad folly I was guilty of, while I will say nothing about your timely rescue and—the ensuing interview."

"You have been playing the spy," said Pearl, flushing hotly.

"Not more than was necessary to make sure that you and Egerton were really sincere," he answered, coolly, "and I am convinced. Do you agree?"

"I suppose I must," said Pearl, "but I ask you not to presume upon it; you are to avoid me, as I would avoid you, if I could."

"Hard terms," he said—"but accepted. Now let us hasten to our friends."

Their friends were coming towards them, wondering among themselves what could have become of Pearl and the baronet. When they met Lucy Dashwood cast a scrutinising glance at both and wondered yet the more.

"We have waited at the Cells for you," she said, "and getting tired are going home."

"Fact is," drawled Sir Charles, "we took a wrong turning in the wood and have been wandering about hopelessly until your musical voice directed us hither."

"Odd to lose yourself in that shrubbery," said Claverly, and Tommy Dray gave vent to a soft chuckle.

He was getting experienced in love matters and fancied he understood it all, but Lucy soon put him right when they moved on back towards Dumbekes, Sir Charles and Pearl having both declined to go on to the Cells alone, as they would have other opportunities of seeing them.

"What were you laughing about just now, Tommy?" she asked.

"Oh, that idea of losing themselves in the wood," he replied.

"Well, what of that, you goose?"

"Too palpable, Lucy; but it is too bad of Friarly, his wife only two months dead."

"Don't you think he has mourned for her long enough?" asked Lucy.

"No, I don't," Tommy stoutly answered. "If you were to die I should mourn for you for years—all my life."

"Wait until we have been married awhile before talking of everlasting grief," said Lucy, quietly. "You don't know me yet, seeing only the smooth side of my nature; and listen to this, Tommy."

"I'm all attentive, Lucy, dear."

"As I hope you ever will be. Well, listen, I say; don't go and talk a lot of nonsense about Lady Pearl and Sir Charles, as there is no more love between them than there is between me and the man in the moon."

"What were they hanging back for?" asked Tommy, amazed.

"I don't know, but I daresay I shall hear; anyway it wasn't love that kept them back, and you tell Barnet Claverly so. Meg won't want telling, as she has eyes as good as mine."

Lucy was disappointed with regard to the confidence she expected from Pearl, who said nothing whatever about the time she had spent in the wood, and refused to accept the hints she received on the subject. Lucy was fairly puzzled and knew not what to make of it.

"That something had taken place I am sure," she said to Meg, "for did you notice her eyes,

what anger was dancing up and down, like waves of the sea after a storm? Sir Charles, too, with all his coolness could not quite hide from me that he had been ruffled."

"I suppose he proposed," said Meg, "and got his quietus."

"It was something different to that," replied Lucy, thoughtfully, "but what it is we must leave for the present."

"Perhaps he had been talking about Lady Friarly. He loved her once, I suppose."

"He may have done so, Meg; but he effectually disabused my mind of all belief in it. He treated her abominably, and I don't wonder at his keeping away from Gaunt House."

"He is not going there again, is he?"

"So he says, and I can understand his resolution, for I give him credit for a little conscience."

Sir Charles had, indeed, given out that he was not going to Gaunt House. It was a gloomy old place, he said, and he never cared for it, and as nobody was likely to buy it he had handed it over to an old servant, who had no objection to solitude and was rather in love than otherwise with ghosts. Who that servant was he did not say.

But after luncheon he had a horse saddled and rode towards this very Gaunt House, lying far away upon the flat land with one gabled end of it facing Dumbekes and backed up with a clump of trees. It was a sad-looking place, centuries old, with a stout, high wall and iron gates and a moat, filled with stagnant water. Within the wall was a court-yard and a neglected garden, all in harmony with the rambling, time-worn building with its latticed windows, over which the ivy thickly hung.

A silent house with the gloom of an uninhabited place upon it—a deserted house, redolent of the past and the dead.

The clang of the horse's hoofs upon the old stone bridge that spanned the moat brought out of the house a spare man of thirty years with a grave, anxious face and grey eyes that looked as if much disturbing thought lay behind them—a man who bore the stamp of having sinned and sinned deeply without having yet become hardened or attained the peace that follows the conviction of being forgiven.

He unbared the rusty gate, and, pulling it back upon its creaking hinges, allowed Sir Charles to pass through. In the courtyard the baronet dismounted and tethered his steed to an iron ring in the wall.

"I shall not stay long," he said. "You did not expect to see me, Sabotson?"

"You gave me no notice," was the reply.

"That is not a straightforward answer. Did you expect me, or did you not?"

"I expected you, because I knew you were in the neighbourhood and would surely call. Won't you come in?"

"No, thanks," Sir Charles replied, with a visible shudder. "I never wish to enter the place again. You seem to bear it pretty well."

"Because I'm not quite alone," the doctor replied. "I have brought down an old servant of mine. You need not look alarmed. She is deaf as a post and would not hold conversation with people if she could. Besides, she knows nothing."

"Of course not," said Sir Charles as they sauntered up and down the courtyard. "My servants are all gone?"

"They ran away the day after the funeral," said the doctor.

"You have had no callers here?" said Sir Charles, after a pause.

"None."

"Nobody to ask any questions?"

"No. What questions could they ask?"

"I don't know. People are curious sometimes. Suppose they should come, and suppose prying people should work up a disinterment, and some man as clever as yourself made an examination—"

"You have no reason to fear they would find poison," said the doctor, quietly. "I am no bungler, and whatever I lay myself out to do it is done. I can't say I liked this business, but you had the whip-hand of me, and I was obliged

to carry it through. I succeeded beyond my expectations."

There was another pause, the men sauntering slowly up and down. Sir Charles pausing here and there to fit his boot into a crack or to push away a small stone, like a man who is hesitating between doing a thing and leaving it alone. Suddenly he turned to his companion and said, abruptly;

"You have promised me to live here?"

"I have, and I mean to do it," was the reply.

"You have given me a lease of it for fifteen years—"

"And three hundred a year."

"Just so—a small enough sum, considering the work I did. But let that pass. I accepted the terms because I could not help myself, and here I remain."

"I was thinking, Sabotson, that by-and-bye you might tire of it, and either seek society abroad or invite some boon companion down to you and then blab in your cups."

"I have no boon companion—no friend—"

"You forget me," said Sir Charles.

"Ah!" said the doctor, drily. "I forgot you, but I am willing to admit that you are a friend—in a way. And I have plans with regard to this house."

"So?"

"Yes. I am thinking of turning it into a private asylum. I think I can get a licence, and the game pays. There are many people in this world who want to be taken care of, and there are many who, in the opinion of their friends, ought to be kept under restraint. I think I shall do very well."

"It will be a horrible life for you," said Sir Charles, "shut up with a lot of lunatics."

"An interesting one," the doctor said.

Again there was a silence, Sir Charles more meditative than ever. With his hands behind his back he paced up and down, eventually pausing before an old sun dial, on which he leaned and looked the doctor full in the face.

"What you have just told me, Sabotson," he said, "has put a plan in my head which I think we could carry out. When do you think you could get your licence?"

"Within a week, I should say," the doctor answered.

"That would do. I could bring you a patient by that time."

"What new task have you in store for me?"

"A very agreeable one I should say—the taking care of a young and handsome woman, liberal pay, and no questions as to treatment asked."

"You, of course, will come to see her," said the doctor, sneeringly.

"That I have not decided upon," said Sir Charles. "It is on the cards that I may leave her entirely to you. She may find the life very irksome at first, and if you are as clever as I take you to be you will soon find a way of making your society agreeable and she will be glad of you to relieve her dulness."

That the proposal was not distasteful to the doctor was apparent by the twinkle in his eyes, but he still hung back a little.

"That game," he said, "was played so extensively in days gone by that it has become dangerous. Who is she?"

"Her name is Mary Smith," replied Sir Charles Friarly, with great deliberation. "She is the daughter of one of my tenants. He educated her as a lady, then died and left her nothing. Being unable to keep up the position she aspired to she went mad."

"She gives herself another name, I suppose," said the doctor.

"She calls herself Lady Pearl Faverton, daughter of the late Duke of Blackford."

"I cannot receive her unless all the forms of the law are complied with."

"That shall be done, Sabotson. Leave that to me. The real Lady Pearl will elope about the same time."

"With you?"

"No; with a beggarly fellow called Hugh Egerton. She will disappear, and then there will be a hue and cry after her. About that time Mary Smith will be brought here. By the

way, can you let me have a sleeping draught? I am very restless at night."

"For how many hours?"

"Can you give me one for three hours?"

"For three days, if you require it. I will fetch it for you—or won't you come in and have a glass of wine?"

"The memory of her," said Sir Charles, "as I saw her last, has shut me out of that house for ever."

"You squeamish men," said the doctor, "ought to lead very good lives. It is a mistake for you to sin."

Sir Charles answered with a grunt and an impatient gesture and the doctor, with a quiet smile upon his face, sauntered into the house.

He was absent about a quarter of an hour and returned with a small phial wrapped up in paper which he placed in the hands of the baronet.

"What is the dose?" Sir Charles asked.

"For you three drops," was the reply, "two would suffice for a woman."

"You will get your licence within a week?"

"Yes. Any day after Saturday you may send my patient here and she will be received."

"Thanks," said Sir Charles, as he loosened his horse, "there's nothing more to arrange before I leave?"

"Except the pay for Mary Smith."

"What are your terms?"

"Two hundred pounds a year while she lives."

"AND IF SHE DIES?" asked Sir Charles, dropping his voice.

"A thousand down," replied the doctor. "A death in these asylums is often the cause of trouble. I don't know but that in some cases it is better to BURY THEM QUIETLY AND SAY NOTHING."

"A thousand down we will say," said Sir Charles, springing into the saddle. "You will take my word?"

"Yes," said the doctor, slowly, "I will take your word. Writings in such matters are dangerous. Good bye."

Sir Charles stooped down and held out his hand. The doctor stretched out his, and their palms met as their eyes exchanged significant glances. Then the baronet put spur to his horse and road across the bridge, the iron gate creaking and groaning as it closed behind him.

The doctor did not remain to watch him, but turned back and re-entered the house, while Sir Charles rode on in deep thought, weighing the pros and cons, the danger and the safety of the plot which he had hatched within his fertile brain.

"If well done," he said, "a sure and sweet revenge. My wife she would never willingly be, and for her rejection she shall be brought low—so low that she will cry aloud for the name of any honest man, and sue for it in vain. But how is it to be done? I want tools to work with—men who will do ANYTHING for money and ask no questions. Where are they to be got? The world is full of them if I only knew where to lay my hands upon them. Patience, and I shall find what I need."

CHAPTER XI.

TOOLS TO WORK WITH.

Oh, then the happy song comes down upon the glowing breast
Soft as rich sunlight on the flowers comes from the golden West.

WHEN a man seeks instruments to work evil he is seldom unsuccessful. Chance, the devil, or what you will, soon leads him to where they can be found, and if he is a man of purpose the wrong is too surely carried out.

Sir Charles Friarly, riding back to Dumbdikes, with thoughts blacker than murder in his heart, bent upon seeking willing accomplices, suddenly found himself confronted by two young swarthy gipsies with handsome, tigerish faces, Harac and Lanah, the brothers of Countycella.

They were doing nothing offensive, nor did they purpose any wrong. They were simply lying on their backs on the sward, and as he rode by they looked up and he looked down, and

instinctively Sir Charles saw before him the men he wanted.

Reining up he favoured them with a long and steady stare, which they returned with interest, keeping their recumbent positions until he spoke.

"Who are you?" he asked, "and what are you doing here?"

"We are only poor devils of gipsies, your honour," replied Harac, "and we are doing nothing but trying if it is possible to live on air."

"A novel experiment for men of your tribe," said Sir Charles, "making money is more in your way."

"If we see a chance, your honour," said Lanah.

"And not very particular about how you make it so that the law can't touch you."

They were beginning to understand each other, and both men, getting upon their feet, touched their hats and drew nearer to the horseman.

"It is just possible that I may need two strong men to assist me with a little work," said Sir Charles, as he coolly lit a cigar. "Now, if I should want you, where can I find you?"

"Down at the camp, your honour," said Lanah. "That's our fire yonder."

"To the deuce with your camp, I am not coming there. Where could you be any day, EVERY day at noon until I want you? Name a place where you can hang about without exciting much notice."

"Will the old gravel pit, half-way between here and the Dumbdikes, suit your honour?" asked Lanah.

"A very good place," replied Sir Charles. "Go and lie on your backs there every day until I come to you. You can have a pound a day for that work until I give you something else to do for which you will be better paid, and in case I should not come to-morrow here are a couple of sovereigns a-piece on account."

He tossed the money to them and rode on. Harac, who had dexterously caught the money, gave his brother his share and turning saw that Countycella had come up unperceived, and was standing close beside them.

"You have a liberal friend there," she said, "too liberal to be a good one."

"Who and what he is does not concern you," answered Harac, frowning. "You have your friend among the house dwellers, so have we."

"But you lord it over mine," said Countycella.

"Ay, because we will not trust them."

"Do you trust HIM?"

Countycella pointed after the retreating horseman with a look of the deepest scorn upon her face, but the two brothers only shrugged their shoulders impatiently.

"It is a new thing," said Lanah, "for a woman of our tribe to question the doings of the men."

"Am I as the rest of your women?" asked Countycella, passionately. "Do you remember the story of my birth? Was not the sky aflame in the north that night?"

"Ay, it was so," replied Harac, uneasily.

"And was I ever as your other children? Did I ever run by the road in my rags to beg of the house dwellers, or in late years take to our lying practice of fortune-telling except in jest or to gratify a moment's whim?"

"Fortune-telling is not ALL lying," said Harac, doggedly.

"No, there are women among us who can dip into the future when they choose," she returned, "and I am one of them. I have read your fate long ago."

"Why have you kept it from us, then?" asked Lanah.

"Because you are my brothers," Countycella answered, "and I could take no pride in torturing you."

"Torturing us?"

"Will it give you any pleasure to learn that the great prison built by the house dwellers will be your doom?" she cried.

Both the men trembled as they looked at her

passionate face, and Harac, spreading out his hands, said:

"Not that, Countycella—anything but that." "Can I alter it?" she asked. "Or did I map out your doom? I tell you that the lone cell without a glimpse of the blue heavens or the green fields will be yours. There shall you spend many lingering days and nights that will seem endless until you close your eyes in death."

"You are trifling with us," hoarsely cried Lanah.

"Do I look as if I jested or lied?" she said.

"Did I ever lie?"

"You have changed since the house dweller won your heart," returned Harac, "you live for him alone."

"As I would have you live for your wives," she said, "whom you beat and make beasts of burden of. Fshaw! and you descended from our kings. My Nesbitt has never an angry word for me, never a frown, although his love for me and my love for him have dragged him down to the mire you wallow in."

"Peace!" cried Lanah, with his hand at his waist. "Peace, as you value your life."

"I do not fear your knife," she replied, "for my time has not yet come. If you plunged it hilt deep into my heart now it could not alter your future. I warn you, have naught to do with yonder villain."

"You were ever against our making an honest penny," muttered Harac.

"When did you ever make one?" she asked.

"Honest as honesty goes with us," returned Harac.

"Well said," replied Countycella, with a bitter laugh, "honesty as it goes with us—limping and halting far behind. But I have warned you, have naught to do with him who rides yonder. The seal is set upon him and he is doomed."

She turned away, and with a free, swinging step she set out towards the distant camp, the two men glancing after her with irresolution stamped on their faces.

"She is going mad," said Harac.

"The handsome house dweller has brought her to this pass," muttered Lanah. "She has grown envious of good fortune when it comes to us."

"We should be fools to turn away from good money while it can be had for nothing. We will take what yonder swell gives us, but we need not do his bidding."

"No, Harac."

"And so we will go to the sand-pit to-morrow, Lanah."

"In truth we will then, for after all the work we are wanted for may be honest."

And having filled their pipes and lighted them with the air of men defying their fates they followed in the wake of Countycella.

Meanwhile Sir Charles Friarly rode back unconscious of the scene between the gipsies, and having given his horse to the groom in waiting sauntered into the garden, where he found Pearl and Meg Dashwood playing tennis with young Claverly and the colonel, and all the rest of the party gathered under the roof of Dumbdikes looking on.

He fell in by the side of Lucy Dashwood, who had Lady Ardinknau on her left.

"We missed you," she said, "and wondered what could have tempted you to ride out alone."

"Nothing tempted me," he said, "I was driven forth by my melancholy."

"You were never considered to be a misanthrope."

"Have I much to make me joyous now, Miss Dashwood?"

"I suppose not," she replied.

Sir Charles had never been a very great favourite with Lucy, but when he chose he could make himself interesting to women, which is better than merely amusing them. The soft, sad expression he summoned to his face touched the heart of the honest girl and she felt sorry for him in his loneliness.

"It is a pity you rode out to-day," she said, in a low voice.

"Why?" he asked.

"You would only revive a sad time by going there," she replied, making a movement with her hand towards Gaunt House.

"It is kind of you," he said, "to think of me at all. But I cannot be a hypocrite with you. I mourn my wife more as friend than lover. Our hearts were never united."

As he had confided in Lady Pearl so he confided in her now. He had been watching Meg with her full, rounded, graceful form and handsome buoyant face, and, Pearl being lost it occurred to him that the colonel's youngest daughter would make a very desirable wife. Furthermore, his attentions to her would cover his scheme against Lady Pearl.

"I hope I made myself understood," he went on, speaking in a low, clear tone that only reached Lucy's ear. "I do not complain of the past. The mistake was my own. I ought to have made sure of the bond between us, for what is life without love?"

"Nothing," said Lucy, glancing towards Tommy Dray, who was performing miracles of blundering in the game, and covering himself and Meg, his partner, with boundless confusion.

"For me," sighed Sir Charles, "there is little hope. I am getting into years—"

"And not thirty yet," said Lucy, merrily. "Come, you are very bad indeed. I see we must take you in hand. People who bring melancholy to Dumbdikes must have it shaken out of them."

"Your charming sister might do it perhaps," he said, "but Mr. Claverly demands all her time."

"There is nothing an *sérieux* there," said Lucy, laughing, "it is quite a boy and girl affair."

"And will your sister be my doctor?"

"I cannot tell, Sir Charles, until I have asked her."

Lucy did not ask Meg first, she consulted the colonel as soon as she could get a few words with him alone, which was when the game concluded and a second set of players took possession of the nets.

"Daddy," she said, putting her arm through his, "I want to consult you about Meg. She has a real lover at last."

"Indeed," returned the colonel, "then who the deuce is the fellow? Is it Raidenstore?"

"No; he's gone with Lady Pearl, most hopeless. Guess again."

"I am a bad hand at guessing," the colonel replied, "tell me who it is."

"Sir Charles Friarly."

"Friarly?" exclaimed the colonel, "that's wrong, and I won't have it."

"He won't propose yet," said Lucy, "but he's terribly sweet upon her, and what I want to know is this: Is he to be encouraged?"

"What does Meg say to it?" asked the colonel.

"I don't know," said Lucy, "I haven't spoken to her yet."

"Perhaps you had better get her views, Lucy. Friarly is a good match in one way. He has plenty of money and is a man of family. I don't quite like the death of his wife, as it never sounded quite square to me, but—Well, Meg must decide for herself."

So Lucy was driven to Meg, who on hearing of the doubtful joy in store for her shrugged her pretty shoulders and asked what was to become of dear old Bet?

"He will have to go sooner or later," said Lucy, "unless he gets hold of some money. You can't marry a man up to his whiskers in debt."

"It will break his heart," sighed Meg.

"I don't think so," said Lucy, "but I see you already lean towards becoming Lady Friarly, and I don't blame you. We are not made for a single life, and what is the use in marrying unless one marries well?"

"True," said Meg, "and in point of looks I shall get a better bargain than you."

"There is something very nice about my Tommy," said Lucy, "or I should not have him."

"Of course there is," returned Meg. "Well,

what shall I do? Encourage Sir Charles a little and see how far I should like to go with him?"

"That's about your best course," said Lucy, "and if you don't like him, up with your helm and go upon another tack. Now go and tell Bet that he is not to bother you too much."

Meg did not half like that part of the programme. She liked Bet, and if their prospect of marrying had not been a hopeless one she would have been as true as steel to him, but she had more sense than some women who wait for a man fifteen or twenty years and when they get him find out what they might have known at first—that he was but a poor mortal with frailties and sins, a bad temper perhaps, and it may be with a tight hand over money.

High and above all else for the chilling of love commend me to a miserly disposition. A spendrift one is to be shunned, but a close, grasping one merits abhorrence, and there are not many women who could calmly endure it. Hot words and ill-usage they will bear, but the miser's meanness—never.

So Meg went to Bet Claverly and told him to throw away a cigar he was smoking and come with her into the shrubbery, where she had something important to tell him.

"Is it very important?" he asked, "for this is a very nice cigar."

"You cannot kiss me if you are smoking," said Meg, "and to-day you will have to kiss me for the last time."

"By George!" exclaimed Claverly, "you are joking, are you not?"

"No, Bet," said Meg, with tears in her eyes, "I'm in a downright serious, earnest mood, and you will see that it is all right if you will come with me."

He tossed away his cigar and they sauntered into the shrubbery to a rustic seat, where they sat down, he putting his arm round her waist.

"Now, Meg," he said, "what is it?"

"Well, Bet, dear," she replied, "you know we always settled that we could never marry each other, both being so poor."

"That's true, Meg."

"And if we ever married I was to look out for a man with money, and you were to marry a merchant's daughter who could bring you cart-loads of gold."

"But we always talked of such things as if they were far away, like old age, rheumatism, and spectacles," said Claverly, with a wistful look in his handsome eyes, "and I don't know that I have ever seriously looked forward to parting with you."

"That is what you ought to have done," said Meg, "and then you would have been prepared."

"But what is up, Meg? Who is it that's come to part us?"

"Sir Charles Friarly is about to honour me with some preliminary attention, and in due time he will propose."

"Has he told you so?"

"No, but Lucy can read men just as we do the advertising placards at a railway station."

"And believes in both, perhaps," said he, grimly.

"No, Bet," said Meg, "she does not believe in either, perhaps, but she takes them for what they are worth."

"I don't like Friarly," said Barnet Claverly; "he's got something under that handsome face of his which would lead me to stop a sister of mine, if I had one, from marrying him."

"And you would stop me, perhaps, Bet?"

"Ay, Meg, and I'll have a try at it."

"No, Bet," said Meg, shaking her head seriously, "that won't do. You are a biased person, and must not come between me and an honest offer. I love you very much, but it would be wrong of us to fool away all our young lives in hopelessly dreaming of what can never be."

"It's a horrible thing," said Barnet Claverly, with real sorrow in his face. "I know that I am a thoughtless ass, a spendthrift, and a

shallow-pated thing, but I've a heart, and I've given it all to you, Meg. But of course I never was so unreasonable as to hope that you would care enough for me to—"

Here he fairly broke down, and bowed his head upon his breast to hide his honest tears. Meg's little heart was wrung, but she was sure that sentiment would be the ruin of both, and held up her head stoutly.

"After all, Bet," she said, "nothing may come of it. But now that Sir Charles has thrown out a hint I must give him his chance. Perhaps if you went away to town and had a little pigeon shooting—"

"Oh, don't talk in that way, Meg," he interposed. "A man with a heart as full as mine is now could not think of that beggarly sport. Well, if it is to be, it must be, but I never felt how mad and foolish my cursed extravagance was until now."

"No retrenchment would put you right, I suppose?" said Meg.

"Not a bit of it," he replied; "I have nothing to retrench with. At the present moment I am living by borrowing of one Jew to pay another, and the only ray of light in my dark future is the assurance that I shall let them all heavily in and make some of the beggars dance with fury. They've robbed me, and now it's my turn."

Meg put her arm round his neck, lifted his face up, and kissed him.

"Poor Bet," she said; "so very foolish. I see there is no hope. You know what to do now?"

"Yes," he said, "leave here at once, and put my head under the first waggon wheel that comes rolling near me."

"You are getting quite shocking in your talk," said Meg. "If you were to do that, how could I come and kiss you and weep over you?"

"You think I am not serious, Meg?"

"I know you are not. You are too sensible, Bet, to take revenge upon what cannot be helped by spoiling your handsome face with a wheel. No, hold up, and you will get your lady with her cartload of gold. Then pay off the Jews, take a small country seat, and make a sober country squire of yourself."

But, notwithstanding his way of speaking, he was very serious. He had never known how dear Meg was to him before, and the prospect of losing her had roused his thoughtless mind to action, and made his heart ache as if a dagger had pierced it. She had never looked prettier than she did at that moment with her fine eyes dimmed with sorrow and her rosy lips quivering.

"You girls are awfully sharp," he said, "but I do hope you are mistaken about Friarly. Do you think we had better part?"

"We must, Bet."

"And have no more pleasant chat together—no more quiet romps—"

"No, all must be given up," said Meg, "and we must go our different ways. Sir Charles's set and your set are quite distinct, so we shall not be running up against each other and recalling that which had better be forgotten."

"You talk as if it was already settled," he said, bitterly.

"It is as good as settled," replied Meg; "Lucy is never mistaken. Good bye, dear old Bet."

She stood up and held out her two hands to him, and he, rising too, held them in his, holding them with a trembling grasp that was strangely at variance with his usually confident manner.

Barnet Claverly was renowned in his regiment for his coolness, and to have seen him so ruffled as he was at that moment would have excited unbounded astonishment in the bosoms of his martial brethren.

"Meg," he said, huskily, "good bye."

He drew her towards him and put an arm about her, holding her close to his fast-beating heart. He looked down upon the large, blue eyes, the ripe lips, the pretty, straight nose, and the wealth of golden hair as things which he loved much but must perforce lose for ever.

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lad, or he might have said more to her than he did, but for the time at least honour held sway over him, and he had no thought unworthy of an honest man.

"Good bye, Meg, if it must be. One kiss."

"And only one," she murmured.

Their faces met, and the one kiss was taken, but he would not let her go, and she strove but feebly to release herself from the hold that had its strength in a love now for the first time fully awakened in both their hearts.

(To be Continued.)

A BOND OF FATE.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Winsome Wife," "So Fair Her Face," &c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FALCON SMOKING-ROOM.

Sublime tobacco! which from East to West
Cheers the tar's labour or the Turkman's rest.

It was cheering, or soothing, or exciting, as the case might be, to the little coterie of men who sat or lounged, as their fancy dictated, in the smoking-room of the most exclusive club in London.

The Falcon Club was luxurious to a degree, and anxious mammas and impecunious papas had a great objection to their darlings joining it, for the subscription was very high and the house charges in accordance with the luxurious living and perfect attendance.

"The Falcons," as they called themselves, boasted that everything in their house was perfect. There was never anything wanted that

was not there, and the wives of the married members were apt to declare that their husbands preferred the club cooking and the club attendance to the privacy of their own homes.

Outsiders looked upon them as a fast set, and their dainty-looking abode in a quiet street in St. James's, with its flower-bedecked balconies and its shining windows, as a very maelstrom of iniquity, into whose fatal swirl were sucked all the fortunes of those who trusted themselves to its tender mercies.

Things were not quite so bad as that. The Falcons did play high sometimes in the enticing little room with the painted windows at the back of the house, but it was all straightforward play, and if a man staked more than he could afford and lost, it was hardly their fault. They paid their way with the utmost regularity. There was not a club in London whose accounts were settled up with such promptness, or whose servants were so respectable, and altogether, in spite of the whispers regarding it, it was considered a great honour amongst young men of a certain class to belong to it.

Smoke of all manner of perfumes filled the room on a soft summer evening, more than a dozen years ago, and found its way out through the open window into the morsel of gravelled yard the club called its garden. It was nothing really but a tiny strip of ground intended for domestic purposes when the house was a private one, but the enterprise of the manager of the Falcon had converted it into a very passable place to smoke in. Gravel had replaced the flags. Such creepers as will grow in London had covered the walls, and flowering plants adorned the corners, and a striped awning shaded the only side where a window overlooked it.

A French window opened on to it from the smoking-room, making it like one large apartment, and the men were sitting inside and out, enjoying themselves after their own fashion.

"Look here, don't you know," comes a voice out of the clouds. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?" ask two or three voices,

turning to a young man on a sofa, whose cigar seems to emit more smoke than any of the rest, and whose airs of ultra elegance are somewhat amusing to his seniors.

"What is true, Lady Jane?"

Mr. Dalton had earned the sobriquet of Lady Jane from his comrades at the club from a certain effeminacy of demeanour and fanciful style of dress which he affected.

They all liked him. He was very young and very rich, and on the whole the Falcons treated him very fairly. They would not let him lose his money when they saw he was doing it recklessly, as very often happened; but they chaffed him mercilessly for all that, and called him Lady Jane till he was ready to challenge the whole club, sometimes, in defence of what he was pleased to call his manhood.

He loved gossip and scandal as dearly as any woman, and he was bursting with some now that would have to be talked over before he was satisfied.

"Don't chaff a fellow," he retorted, launching the end of a cigar at the person who had called him by the name he abhorred. "All this about Carmichael, I mean."

"What do you mean, youngster?" asked his tormentor, though he knew very well what the young fellow alluded to. "Be explicit or nothing."

"Why, that he's done up—smashed—gone to the devil altogether. They say he has."

"Who say, most sapient oracle?"

"Why, everybody—some of you fellows. I heard the whisper first in here. You said that he hadn't a penny, and that he was going the pace desperately and must come to grief soon."

"True, oh! king," responded the gentleman who had addressed Mr. Dalton as Lady Jane—a tall, handsome young fellow, known among the Falcons as "Freddy, my boy," his real name being the Hon. Frederick Claughton, "but it does not follow that he has. He has paid up here, and for aught I know everywhere else. He was just the sort of donkey to go paying his

debts—quixotic and chivalrous, and all that sort of thing."

"Then he's a fool," said Mr. Dalton, "for he's pawning his things to live."

The men burst into a roar of laughter at the idea of anyone who had been a member of the Falcon Club, and had not yet taken his name off the books, doing such a thing as that.

But Chester Dalton did not laugh. He only went on puffing his cigar till the rest were quiet, and then said:

"It is true. I saw him."

They laughed again, and out of the court, from amongst the flowers, came a voice deep and sonorous:

"Who's the woman?"

They were all silent for a moment, for Mr. Carr Molyneux was an authority amongst them, and by tacit consent, more than from anything he said or did, great deference was paid to him.

"What do you mean?" asked Chester Dalton, and Harold Carr Molyneux laughed as he took his meerschaum from his lips and puffed the smoke in curling lines into the air.

"My dear Lady Jane," he said. "You really are very young in the world's ways. Don't you know that when a man goes to the land the only question is, 'Who's the woman?' It is sure to be a daughter of Eve that has helped him on the downward way."

"But Carmichael was not a lady's man. He never talked of women, and we were tolerably intimate."

"He was tolerably intimate with a good many of us. Still waters run deep, you know, my boy, and from his very silence I argue that I am right—it is a woman who has sent him to the devil, for the youngster is right in saying he has gone on that road." He added, turning to the rest of the men, "I happen to be seignior of some of his proceedings lately, poor devil!"

There was a general turn to Mr. Carr Molyneux now. Your club lounge is a true gossip and loves scandal as dearly as the most empty-headed old woman in Christendom.

"His books were offered to me the other day, sub rosa of course, by a dealer and connoisseur. When a man comes to parting with his household gods it is generally a sign that things are not well with him."

"And you bought them?"

"Part of them, and in doing so have my authority for saying there is a woman in the case."

"How?"

Mr. Carr Molyneux laughed at the question, and filled his pipe again before he answered.

"How? Because I found her portrait on the margin of every passionate poem and thrilling love story amongst them. His love for making thumb-nail sketches has betrayed him."

"And who is she?"

"Don't know. Shouldn't have asked you if I did," was the curt reply.

And then the men turned once more to Mr. Dalton to find out what he knew.

It was not very much. The gentleman under discussion—Mr. Adrian Carmichael—had been till lately a very popular member of The Falcon. No one quite knew what his means were, or anything but that he was a gentleman of good family, the best of a long line, and that he paid his way with scrupulous regularity, and made but few acquaintances.

He had altered considerably of late, having become somewhat moody and silent, and had withdrawn himself a good deal from the club, which had been almost his residence at one time.

Suddenly, without any warning, it came to the knowledge of some of the members that he had come to the end of his resources. He was seen once or twice loitering about his old haunts very strange in manner and appearance, and then he vanished as completely as if he had been swallowed by an earthquake.

Chester Dalton confessed to having seen him, and his story was eagerly waited for.

"It was in the City," he said. "I was there with my governor, and I was waiting for him in a frowsy street outside some office, and I saw

Carmichael coming along. I was just going to speak to him, but on my honour he looked like a madman, so wild and strange, and I did not like to interfere with him. He was fumbling with his watch chain, and he turned in a little dirty doorway that I did not see was a pawnbroker's till after I had lost sight of him. He came out without his watch, and the ring was gone from his finger, for he had no gloves on, and I noticed his hands."

It was a clear case, and there was a general chorus of "Poor devil." The Falcons did not know what else to say, but more than one man there resolved to succour their quondam comrade if ever they should come across him in his fallen condition.

It was all true. Adrian Carmichael had gone headlong down the road that leads to ruin in this world, and the grave for a finish, and all for a woman, as Mr. Carr Molyneux had surmised.

The men left off talking about him. When the waters have closed over anyone it is not pleasant to be haunted by the memory of the despairing one, and they soon found something fresh to talk about—the latest specimen of the fashionable beauty, the last whim of fashion in dress, anything but Adrian Carmichael and his ruin.

By and bye they dropped off, some to the theatre, some to the card-room, some home to their wives—the minority these—leaving only one or two besides the gentleman who had asked "Who is the woman?"

"Molyneux!" called a voice from the inner recesses of the smoking-room.

And Mr. Carr Molyneux lifted himself from his lounge and sauntered in.

Only a very intimate friend of his own was there, and he sat down.

"Well," he said, "what is it?"

"Who's the woman?"

"The very question I asked myself, Montague, my boy. I don't know, and I want to know."

"I don't mean that woman. I mean the woman who is filling your thoughts."

"Mine?"

"Just so."

Mr. Molyneux looked at his friend and laughed.

"Do I wear my heart upon my sleeve in that fashion?" he said, surveying his own handsome face in the glass above the chimney-piece.

"Not to all the world perhaps. To me you do. I have seen the symptoms these many days."

"You have sharp eyes, Montague. You are right, old boy. There is a woman."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know."

"Where does she live?"

"I have not the least idea."

"What is she?"

"You know as well as I do. She is a witch. I know that much, for she has driven me mad nearly. If I don't find her I shall die or go mad or do something equally foolish. I have begun to believe in the black art during the last few days, I can assure you."

CHAPTER II.

TWO WOMEN.

"The woman that seduces all mankind."

By her we first were taught the wondrous arts.

GERARD MONTAGUE looked at his friend in utter amazement. He had thought him the most phlegmatic of men, and if not a woman hater, certainly not an admirer of the sex, till within the last few days when he had seen the signs which men understand so well of a lost heart, or at any rate an errant fancy.

Harold Carr Molyneux was a rich man now, and the heir to a great fortune in perspective, and an earldom besides, and all the manœuvring mammas and marriageable daughters in town and country were angling for him with a persistence that only amused him.

He was not a marrying man, he did not scruple

to tell everybody. There were plenty of children in the family to keep up the old name and the title without his giving up his liberty, and he meant to enjoy life in his own fashion.

And here he was, to his friend's amazement, confessing to being stricken to the heart by a shaft from the bow of "the senior junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid," in a fashion that might have been looked for in a boy like Chester Dalton, but not in a man of the world like himself.

"Yes, it's true," he said, lighting his pipe, which had gone out. "I know I'm an ass, an idiot, the greatest fool that ever stepped, but there is a woman, Montague, and I do not even know her name."

Gerard Montague laughed. The thing seemed so ridiculous.

"You must be ill," he said. "Come out for a stroll and tell me what the lovely creature is like, for of course she is a lovely creature; they all are."

"Lovely? Yes, beyond any loveliness that I have ever seen. Her face haunts me like a vision, Montague; a fair, spirituelle face, with a cloud of golden hair rising above it; a sad face, as if the world were hard upon her somehow; and such earnest eyes! They seemed to look into my very soul."

"And where did all this happen?"

"In Paris, a fortnight ago. I tried in vain to find out who she was. There were so many blonde-haired women there that any questions went for nothing."

"Ah, blonde hair is fashionable just now," Mr. Montague said, merrily. "and a little change in the tint would disguise her past all recognition. Perhaps the next time you saw her she had reddened it a little and passed you without being known."

"She was no woman of that class," Mr. Molyneux said, sharply. "She was a lady."

"But, my dear boy, ladies do such things, my own sisters do. It's a beastly fashion, but it is the fashion. Come along with me this evening. I'll introduce you to a lady whose beauty will put all thoughts of your fair-haired innamorata out of your head. Miss Esmond has no need of dyes and pigments. Nature has been bountiful to her in the matter of beauty."

"Is that the new heiress?"

"Yes."

"Is she good form?"

"Come and see. The governor has something to do with her property. I don't know what. She's worth looking at and thinking about, I can tell you."

"Where does she live?"

"Winchester Gate. She would not be in that place if everything were not comme il faut. She has the orthodox chaperon, who is a lady. You know her, Lady Hester Willoughby?"

"Oh, if she has undertaken to pilot the new beauty through the perils of the season, the house is one a fellow may go to. But are you intimate enough with Miss—what's her name?"

"Esmond—Kathleen Esmond."

"To take any friends to her house, you know, it seems rather a free and easy way of doing things."

"I have the privilege of introducing you at any rate. Miss Esmond wants to be introduced to you."

"The deuce she does! It would be a pity to bank her. I hope she'll be edified. I am at your service, monsieur, whenever you are ready."

The two men emerged from the club and called a hansom. There were always plenty of fast cabs with decent horses at the service of the Falcons, and they were speedily driven to Winchester Gate, an aristocratic row of houses tenanted only by the most exclusive personages. Mr. Carr Molyneux looked up at the house with a critical eye as the cab stopped.

"Very well done," he said, "and very quickly. This house was shut up only a few days ago."

"Miss Esmond likes to have things done

when said. An self. There young immer knew Her but sh father's repres her li more i appella been b Her made E and had the lack impro his ener rid of w His e him to feed chase st bottom. No of his brea strength thing for up to fin ness that of the Da Some existence tain of w might h hoped to ground t But he making a fairy tale sunk in boards and wife, a sin fairly died surrounde like the la things of f Her dan She had th and the sp had launchi gorgeous t As she queened it soul to say do. Her faith ness settled to do but to earned and accounts sh Mr. Moly awkwardnes finement and the magnifi lounge and name. Kathleen full pride of brought his though he v full glory of She did not whom he had unlike as any He had dream in Paris of This magni black as the that seemed his thoughts She was to hand that sh

when she orders them," Gerard Montague said.

And his friend shrugged his shoulders.

"A strong-minded woman," he said to himself. "I shan't care for her."

He had no idea what the heiress was like. There had been a good deal of talk about this young lady, who had inherited, so report said, an immense fortune made in America. No one knew how or cared to ask perhaps.

Her origin was obscure to say the least of it, but she was undoubtedly of good family, on her father's side, and chance had made her the last representative of the name she had borne all her life without knowing that it was of any more importance than the common everyday appellations of those amongst whom she had been brought up.

Her father, a younger son and a scamp, had made England too hot to hold him in his youth, and had tried roughing it in the far West, with the lack of success that so often accompanies impromptu emigration, until the fates directed his energies towards yet another way of getting rid of what little money he had.

His evil genius, as he thought, then prompted him to buy a piece of mountain land, too barren to feed even a donkey, and his ill-starred purchase stuck to him like a barnacle to a ship's bottom.

No one would buy it of him, and he wasted his breath in curses on his ill-luck and his strength in trying to make it yield him something for his outlay, till one morning he woke up to find a sun offered for his desolate wilderness that seemed to him like the whole capital of the Bank of England.

Some wiser head than his had discovered the existence of both lead and silver in the mountain of which his domain formed part, and he might have realised such a sum as he never hoped to see again if he had only sold the bit of ground that had cost him so much anxiety.

But he was wise for once and refused to sell, making money in a fashion that seemed like a fairy tale out of the mines that were speedily sunk in his despised land, and adding to his hoards and his purchases year by year, till his wife, a simple Western girl, far too good for him, fairly died of the glory and magnificence that surrounded her, and went down into her grave like the lady of Burleigh—a martyr to the good things of this world.

Her daughter was made of different stuff. She had the old blood of the Esmonds in her veins, and the splendour of life into which her father had launched was the very thing to suit her gorgeous tastes.

As she had queened it out West, so she queened it here in Winchester Gate, with not a soul to say her nay in anything she chose to do.

Her father was dead, and the Western business settled and got rid of, she had nothing to do but to spend the money her father had earned and her mother had died of. And by all accounts she was doing it with a free hand.

Mr. Molyneux was prepared to see gaucherie, awkwardness, anything but the well-bred refinement and ease with which he was greeted by the magnificent woman who rose from a low lounge and came forward at the mention of his name.

Kathleen Esmond was at the very zenith and full pride of her beauty when Gerard Montague brought his friend to her, and man of the world though he was he almost trembled before the full glory of her charms.

She did not touch his heart as the woman of whom he had spoken had done, the two were as unlike as any two beings on the earth could be. He had dreamed ever since the chance rencontre in Paris of a fair creature with golden hair. This magnificent being had looks almost as black as the raven's wing, and full dark eyes that seemed to pierce his very heart and read his thoughts almost.

She was tall and splendidly formed, and the hand that she held out to her new acquaintance

had driven more than one sculptor and painter to the verge of despair, from sheer inability to reproduce it faithfully on canvas or in marble.

She was dressed in a long, trailing robe of yellow silk that went almost into red as the shadows deepened on its folds, with great clusters of golden brown leaves and flowers here and there about it. A daring costume which would have made most women simply hideous, but which suited her strange, weird beauty to perfection.

Gerard Montague greeted her and her chaperon with emphasis. Mr. Carr Molyneux stared at her for a moment utterly unable even to speak the most simple greeting, for he knew her at once, the woman who had sent Adrian Carmichael to ruin—the unknown beauty whose face was on every scrap of paper belonging to him, and every blank space in the books his friend had bought.

He did speak to her after a pause, and she replied in a low, sweet tone that was intoxication itself to anyone who loves that "excellent thing in woman," a low, sweet voice, and he sat bewitched by the new, strange spell of a woman's fascinations, and hardly knew how the time sped away.

He was sure the face was the same; poor Adrian had portrayed it a hundred times and with complete success. His talent as a draughtsman was marked.

Very likely he had made a fool of himself, and taken this gorgeous beauty's civility for something more than was meant. He would mention his name suddenly and note the effect.

He managed to do so without straining a point. Miss Esmond was ready to talk on any subject. London was new to her, and it was easy to turn the conversation to art and its votaries.

The heiress had a fancy for painting and painters, and she grew voluble on the subject.

"You paint, Mr. Molyneux?" she asked.

"Not I," was the answer. "I am afraid I am an idle fellow, Miss Esmond, and do nothing at all. But I none the less admire those who do," he added, "and some of my friends are capital amateur artists."

"Amateur art is very often overlooked when it ought to be encouraged," Kathleen Esmond said. "Some of the pictures by the regular fraternity that find their way on to the walls at exhibitions are simply disgraceful. No, I have not been to any of the galleries yet, that is a treat in store for me. I seem to have had so much to do."

"I have some capital etchings and thumbnail sketches I should like to show you," Mr. Molyneux said. "They were done by a gentleman whose name you may know perhaps—Adrian Carmichael."

"Oh, do you know him?" asked Miss Esmond, without a trace of any emotion. Perhaps she had no need to feel any. "We saw a good deal of him in Paris, and I have some nice things of his doing."

She touched the bell as she spoke and a servant entered.

"Desire Miss Glendower to bring me the small folio out of my boudoir," she said, "and her music. My companion plays splendidly," she added, as the man left the room, "and I know Mr. Montague likes music."

"And so does Molyneux," that gentleman replied. "You could not give him a greater treat than good music well played."

"And he will have both when he hears Miss Glendower play. It is a rare treat. She inherits her talent from her father I hear. He was a musician of wonderful talent. Ah, here she comes. Lilian, my dear, I—Are you ill, Mr. Molyneux? What is the matter?"

She might well ask, for Harold Carr Molyneux had started to his feet with a sudden exclamation as the door opened to admit the woman who had been in his thoughts day and night since his chance rencontre with her amid the flowers of the Champs Elysées.

CHAPTER III.

LILIAN GLENDOWER.

A daughter of the gods—divinely tall
And most divinely fair.

THE poet's description applied wonderfully well to Lilian Glendower, and the words flashed into Gerard Montague's mind as he watched her cross the room and lay on the table at Miss Esmond's side the small portfolio she carried. That lady said "Thank you" in a careless way that made Mr. Molyneux's blood boil.

Who was this gracious creature with the golden crown and the queenly grace of manner, that this black-browed woman should treat her as if she were nothing more than a servant?

Kathleen's charms were all forgotten in the radiance of this new apparition, and Mr. Montague was not slow to notice the bewitchment that had fallen on his friend.

"The woman?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Yes."

"By Jove!" he muttered, under his breath, "and she's only companion, or a lady help, or something of that sort. There'll be ructions presently—Miss Esmond is not the sort of person to brook a rival."

He kept his thoughts to himself and watched his friend, much amused at his tell-tale face and conscious manner.

"You look at Miss Glendower as if you knew her," Miss Esmond said presently to Mr. Carr Molyneux, with a slight frown.

"I have seen her before. She will remember me doubtless. Will you not introduce me to her?"

"I think you are making a mistake," the heiress said, somewhat spitefully. "You hardly understand Miss Glendower's position here—she is my paid companion. She would be very much disconcerted if I took to introducing her to all my friends."

"She is a lady, is she not?"

"Oh, yes, by birth and—"

"Then she will not be disconcerted at speaking to a gentleman. May I beg the favour of an introduction?"

Miss Esmond felt she had made a mistake and she hastened to atone for it as far as she could.

"Lilian, my dear," she said, "here is a gentleman who claims acquaintance with you. Mr. Carr Molyneux—Miss Glendower."

"You and I have met before, Miss Glendower," Harold Carr Molyneux said, trembling before this woman whom he had only seen once like a schoolboy before an angry master. "Do you remember me?"

"I don't think I do," was the answer, in a voice clear and sweet of sound as a silver bell, very different from the insinuating tones of Kathleen Esmond's low-spoken words. There were truth and openness in the one voice, allurements and fascination in the other.

He recalled the incident of their meeting to her mind, and she recollected him then, but with no special sign of interest. He had made no impression on her, though every line of her sweet calm face had burnt itself into his heart never to be effaced.

She seated herself at the piano, and began to turn over the music, but Gerard Montague could see that she listened with eager interest to every word that was said about Adrian Carmichael.

They turned over his sketches and commented on them, and Kathleen Esmond said what an amusing fellow he had proved himself, and how they had enjoyed his society at Paris, and Lilian Glendower's fingers wandered idly over the keys, and Lady Hester Willoughby listened to the conversation with a look of veneration on her handsome old face.

"So you think he has gone to the bad, do you?" the heiress said, playing with a costly fan, and bringing the whole army of her fascinations to bear on her new guest.

"I don't think he has gone to the bad," Mr. Carr Molyneux replied, pointedly. "But I believe he has fallen into the toils of a Circe, who has not rested until she has completed her work, and

cast him out stripped and helpless to starve or die as fortune sees fit."

"Dear me, I thought that was what you gentlemen call going to the bad," Miss Esmond said, carelessly, as if she had but languid interest in the subject in hand. "Where a woman is concerned men generally have scant pity for the unfortunate who comes to grief."

"I know but little of Mr. Carmichael, Miss Esmond," Harold replied, gravely, "but I pity him from my heart. It is an awful thing to 'set your life on a cast,' as Shakespeare has it, and then to lose."

"You speak as if the case were your own, Mr. Molyneux. Are you sure that it is as you say, and that Mr. Carmichael is indeed in difficulties?"

"I know that he has gone down into the deep waters, so deep that he will never lift his head again out of their black depths. I know too that it was a woman's hand that sent him there, and I know the woman, Miss Esmond."

"Dear me, you are quite a dangerous person," Miss Esmond said, with a little laugh. "I am very sorry to think that your dismal story is true, for we found Mr. Carmichael a very amusing acquaintance, and we hoped to see him again when we were settled in London. Did we not, Lady Hester?"

"I did not," that lady replied, quietly.

And Miss Esmond seemed rather disconcerted by her prompt reply.

"He will hardly come within your ken, madam," Harold Carr Molyneux said, after a moment's pause. "A man who is reduced to disposing of the watch out of his pocket, the rings from his fingers—nay, the very books that he has prized as household gods—for bread will hardly obtrude himself on your notice."

"I almost hope he won't," the heiress said, carelessly, "though it seems a cruel thing to say, but when one can do nothing for a person, to have them looking like death's head at a feast is unpleasant to say the least of it."

"Poor Carmichael will cause you no such unpleasantness, madam," Gerard Montague said, disgusted with her heartlessness, and almost loathing the beauty he had so admired before. "He is too proud to flout his altered fortunes before any of his old friends. If we could find him we would gladly help him, all of us at the Falcons, we all liked him."

"I have heard of the Falcons," Miss Esmond said. "I dare say some of his ruin lies at the door of that exclusive club of yours, it takes a fortune to belong to it, I hear."

She rose from her seat and went to the piano, bidding Lillian Glendower, with a gesture that was almost insulting, find her a particular song.

"I'm afraid I shall be set down as a very improper person," she said, "but I must sing, and I don't know any of the orthodox songs. What will London drawing-rooms say if I break out into this sort of thing?"

She burst out with the full power of a magnificent contralto voice into a poem of Bret Harte's set to music, something about a garrison where two men gave their lives to serve a gun, firing on the enemy, till freedom to the town brought death to them both, and they never knew the good work they had done. Right dramatically Miss Esmond sang the song, a strange one for a lady, and almost breathlessly her hearers listened, with the words "Anpola was freed, Anpola was freed" ringing in their ears.

Gerard Montague was turning away from the piano to compliment the singer, when a light touch on his arm stayed him, and he looked up to see Lillian Glendower's eyes fixed on him with a look of entreaty.

"Let me speak to you," she whispered. They will not notice. That story—is it true?"

"About Carmichael?"

"Yes."

"True every word, and worse. I verily believe he is starving, and I think, as Molyneux does, that a woman is at the bottom of it."

"A woman!—yes; that one."

She glanced to where Miss Esmond was receiving the compliments of the other guests, and her lips curled into a scornful smile.

"I am not supposed to know anything," she said, "but I do. I am only Miss Esmond's companion, and companions should have no feelings, you know—no senses but what they are paid to exhibit. If Adrian Carmichael goes to his death—if the ruin that has come upon him is greater than he can bear—the sin of it will lie at her door. Where is he, Mr. Montague? Tell me, if you can."

"Hiding himself somewhere, I fancy. A man of our club saw him come out of a pawnbroker's in a shady street in the City, where he had been to pledge his watch and ring. It is hard times with him wherever he is, poor fellow!"

"And she lured him on. She flattered him to the top of his bent. She let him think that he was everything to her and that the world held no one like him in her eyes, and then, when he asked her to fulfil all that she had made him believe and be his wife, she turned upon him with the scorn of a fiend and laughed at him and told him he was mad—that he had made a strange blunder, and bade him not make a fool of himself but go away and forget her."

"Hush, hush! She will hear you," said Gerard Montague in amazement, for the gentle, quiet-looking Lillian seemed like someone suddenly transformed. "I hope you are mistaken. I hope for the honour of your lovely sex that what you have said is only your fancy."

"It is no fancy. Ask Lady Hester. I have heard her expostulating with Miss Esmond about it. She is hardly a woman, Mr. Montague—she has not a single feeling of womanhood about her."

"And yet you stay with her."

"I am paid to do so, and she is not unkind to me. I am supposed to have eyes, voice and hands at her command, but no feelings—no inclinations, save what my mistress decrees. Find out for me, if you can, what has become of Adrian Carmichael and how a friend can serve him."

"I will, if possible," Mr. Montague said, and then Miss Esmond's voice from the other side of the room peremptorily bade Miss Glendower sing something, and Lillian prepared to obey.

Kathleen Esmond was not drinking the full cup of flattery and adulation that she had expected from her new acquaintance. She felt that Lillian was somehow more of an attraction than she was, and she was disagreeable accordingly. She had kept this particular evening free, for Gerard Montague had told her he would bring his friend, if possible, and Mr. Carr Molyneux was one of the few exclusive men that women always strove to make acquaintance with. He had disappointed her. He had turned the conversation into a disagreeable channel.

What was it to her what had become of Adrian Carmichael? If men chose to go to their ruin it was no business of hers. And now there was Miss Glendower making eyes at Mr. Montague, who had been remarkably attentive to herself and Lady Hester till to-night. Altogether she felt she had missed the opera for nothing, and she would certainly give Miss Glendower a piece of her mind before she slept.

Meanwhile Lillian's white fingers were touching the ivory keys in a different fashion from the way in which she had played for Miss Esmond's song, and presently she poured out the full power of her magnificent voice in a song all about woman's love and constancy—a song that Adrian Carmichael had been wont to sing while he was in the full fever of the madness that had come upon him with his first look at Kathleen Esmond's witching beauty.

It was an effort to get through it, and by the time she had finished her lips were quivering and her eyes full of regretful tears.

"Don't be so absurdly sentimental, Lillian," the heiress said, sharply, catching the break in her voice. "It is awfully bad form to whimper over your songs. That sort of thing has quite gone out of fashion."

"I will go to my room if you do not require any more music," the girl said, rising and taking no notice of the sharp words. "Thank you, Mr. Molyneux, but I am accustomed to wait upon myself."

This to the man who admired her above all

earthly things, and who had risen to open the door for her.

"We shall meet again, I hope," he said, as timidly as a schoolboy.

"I am not my own mistress," she replied, proudly, and then passed out of his sight, leaving him more in love than ever.

"Poor Molyneux!" said Gerard Montague to himself, as they walked away half an hour afterwards. "He is in love for the first time in his life, I verily believe, with a woman who has given her heart to someone else, and she's not one to be tempted by his wealth, or I never read character aright. She'd rather go and starve with Carmichael wherever the Fates have bestowed him."

(To be Continued.)

A KIRK WALL correspondent states that the great event of the Shetland Islands regatta this season was the pulling race. Last year the Shetland lasses beat a boat manned by a revenue cutter crew, and this season the same three strapping girls came in victorious against all comers, although the other boats were manned by four young women each. Last year Sheriff Thoms acted as coxswain, but this season all the crews pulled without coxswains, the winning crew covering the mile course in half a minute less than the closest competitor. They were enthusiastically cheered, as they deserved, for the ladies used the oars in a manner that would shame many male crews.

FOOD.—A Leipzig physician, Dr. Beck, has written an article on the moral effect on different articles of food, in which he says:—"The nervousness and peevishness of our times are chiefly attributable to tea and coffee; the digestive organs of confirmed coffee drinkers are in a state of chronic derangement which re-acts on the brain, producing fretful and lachrymose moods. Many ladies addicted to strong coffee have a characteristic temper, which I may describe as a mania for acting the persecuted saint. Chocolate is neutral in its psychic effects, and is innocent. The snappish, petulant humour of the Chinese can be ascribed to their fondness for tea. Beer is brutalising, wine impassions, whisky infuriates, but eventually unmans. Alcoholic drinks, combined with a flesh and fat diet, totally subjugate the moral man, unless their influence be counteracted by violent exercise. But with sedentary habits they produce those unhappy flesh sponges which may be studied in metropolitan bachelor halls, but better yet in wealthy convents."

MUSIC-POUNDING.—"I don't like your chopped music, any way," says Oliver Wendell Holmes. "That woman—she has more sense in her little finger than forty medical societies—Florence Nightingale, says that the music you pour out is good for the sick, but music you pound out isn't. Not that exactly, but something like it. I have been to hear some music-pounding. It was a young girl with as many white muslin flounces round her as the planet Saturn has rings who did it. She gave the music-stool a twirl and fluffed down on it like a whirl of soap-suds in the hand-basin. Then she worked her wrists and her hands, to limber 'em, I suppose, and spread out her fingers till they looked as though they would pretty much cover the key board, from the growling end to the squeaky end. Then those hands of hers made a jump at the keys as if they were a couple of tigers coming down on a flock of black and white sheep, and the piano gave a great howl as if its tail had been trod on. Dead stop—so still you hear your hair growing. Then another jump and another howl, as if the piano had two tails, and you had trod on both of 'em at once, and then a grand clatter and a scramble, and strings of jumps, up and down, back and forth, one hand over the other, like a stampede of rats and mice, more than like anything I call music. I like to hear a woman sing, and I like to hear a fiddle sing, but the noises they hammer out of their wood and ivory anvils—don't talk to me, I know the difference between a bullfrog and a wood thrush."

TRUE TILL DEATH; OR, A FAILURE OF JUSTICE.

CHAPTER XX.

Our deeds still travel with us from afar
And what we have been makes us what we are.

STRUCK by a sudden horror as his eyes fell on the despairing face of his wife, and he saw the blood welling from her bosom, Dennis Vanstone, with a terrible revulsion of feeling, turned and fled from the spot where she lay stiffening in death, and as he fled the scream, that was for evermore to haunt him day and night, rang shrilly and piercingly through the evening air, and for the first time a cold terror shot through his heart; the fear of death, a murderer's death, arose before him, and he plunged deep into the woods to hide himself from the face of man.

He seated himself in a deep dingle in Garford wood and crouched like a hunted animal in the tall ferns and thick brushwood and listened eagerly for voices and footsteps, for the footsteps of his pursuers—for surely that heartrending shriek must have been heard, and some eye must have seen him speeding from the scene of his crime—and for the sound of their voices.

But hour after hour passed and all was silent, and the moon set and thick clouds drifted across the sky, making all around dark and gloomy, and under cover of the profound obscurity Dennis crept forth from his hiding-place and with stealthy footsteps, keeping within shadow of the trees and hedges and choosing the most unfrequented paths, he swiftly made his way towards the coast.

He had no settled plan of action in his head, no fixed intention of any kind in his wanderings, only a vague feeling that he must get on board ship again somehow and leave the land of his crime, or worse would come of it.

So a blind instinct of self-preservation led him on, and as he strode fast and nervously through the night the wild cry rang again and again in his ear, the vision of a woman lying bloody and lifeless on the grass at his feet rose up before him. He seemed to see her frightened face and uplifted, imploring eyes, to hear her half-choked cries for mercy, to feel her writhing and struggling helplessly in his strong grasp, and his brain whirled at the remembrance.

Why had he done it—why? The sea was before him now, and as the sun rose up clear and bright he sat on the edge of the cliff on an unfrequented down and all came back to him. Yes, it was for her deceit, her treachery, he had killed her. And Hilda, what would she say? Would she not now hate and loathe him? Pshaw! what was he thinking of? He was shaken, unnerved—who would ever know it was he who had done it? Was he not counted as a dead man, believed by all to have perished like the rest of the passengers in the ill-fated *Bertha*? Yes, and yet that cry—whose voice had uttered it? not hers, not his dead wife's—no, her eyes were glazing in death ere he left her; the cry must have come from another. Had he been seen and recognised?

And he passed his hand over his face and looked at his torn and tattered garments. Little chance of his being recognised. A thick, black beard of nigh three weeks' growth covered and concealed the lower part of his face and two long, black locks fell far over his forehead and half hid the fierce, bloodshot eyes. No—one would have recognised in the gaunt, haggard, unkempt tramp sitting so moodily on the cliff the bright, handsome young farmer of other days.

"My clothes might be recognised though," he muttered, and taking his bundle from his back he hastily divested himself of the ragged clothing he wore and attired himself in a coarse blue Jersey and sailor's cap, and taking the blood-stained garments he made them into a bundle, enclosed several heavy stones in it, and threw

it with all his force far away into the sea below him, and then, after looking carefully around, continued his walk in the direction of Fallgate, where he hoped to be able to find a vessel ready to sail, and to take a passage in her to some foreign land, for since the morning had dawned his plans had become more definite, and he saw the necessity of quitting England at once and for ever.

Arrived at Fallgate he walked at once down to the harbour to inquire if any ship were likely to be sailing for foreign parts. Yes, he was told there were two, the *Ocean Queen*, bound for Mauritius, and the *San José* for Lisbon.

Dennis fixed on the latter. It was to sail on the morrow, two days before the *Ocean Queen*, and time was an object to him, and after a little wrangling with the captain, a swarthy, powerful-looking Portuguese, Dennis secured a passage on her to her destination.

Little it mattered to him where fortune led him. Lisbon would suit him as well as any other place, and if the skipper did put in at Cadiz instead it would be all the same to him, and having concluded his bargain he bent his steps to a small inn, frequented by sailors, near the harbour, and asking for a bedroom was shown into a tiny apartment overlooking the neighbouring dock, and throwing himself on the miserable-looking bed it contained fell into a heavy sleep; a sleep that lasted till near midnight; a sleep filled with strange, troubled dreams, in which Dennis was to be for ever pursued by a pale, revengeful shade, whom he strove in vain to elude, and whose piercing cries froze his blood with terror.

He woke, his forehead bathed in perspiration, and the songs and shouts of a party of seamen in the room below him roused him to a complete wakefulness.

Rising quickly he left the room and strolled out into the street. The clock struck twelve as he left the little inn. There were still five hours to pass before daylight, and he paced restlessly up and down till the songs in the tap-room died away and one after another the half-tipsy sailors sauntered out into the street, and forming themselves into groups lounged away in various directions.

Through the empty, deserted streets he wandered, down by the silent quays, against which the rising waters dashed and murmured feebly, and then out on to the sandy beach, where the waves broke in long, white rollers on the shore and the wind blew chilly.

It was a wild, weird scene, and Dennis felt strongly its fascination. There was something in the roaring, unquiet of the great deep akin to the unquiet in his own soul, and the desolation of the long, low, sandy shore, uncheered by a single bush, or tree, or habitation, and the vast expanse of heaving waters, ungladdened by the presence of a single sail, accorded well with the sense of utter loneliness that filled his heart. He wandered on amongst the gloomy sand-hills till with a start and a shiver he stopped and remained transfixed with terror, as a wild, unearthly cry fell on his ear.

It was but the wail of a startled sea-bird, as he understood a moment later, as the white-breasted gulls sailed slowly round and round over his head, screaming mournfully; but it brought the cry that had haunted him so unceasingly for many an hour so vividly back to his remembrance that he turned and fled from the spot, pale and trembling, and when he reached the little inn again he shut himself up in his tiny bedroom till the sun rose and it was time for him to go on board the *San José*.

A few hours afterwards he was sailing down the Channel with a fair breeze, and England had faded away in the distance. He was safe.

Strange! this certainty brought him little satisfaction. What had he left to live for? The life he had fled to save would henceforth be a cheerless one indeed, and as his mad passion of jealousy had fled when it had been too late and he had made Eleanor his wife, so now that he had revenged himself on her, did his feelings of bitter hatred towards her die away, and to them succeeded an agony of remorse almost too heavy to endure, and as he now calmly reviewed his

life and saw the terrible mistakes he had made in it, the cruelty he had been guilty of, the follies and finally the terrible crime he had committed, he felt as if the life he had a few short hours before been so eager to save was scarce worth the keeping.

And yet he could not die. No, for the great hereafter was before him, and the fear of it fell on him. He was afraid to die and face his Maker, whose commands he had violated, and give an account of his deeds to Him.

A week's sail brought the *San José* within sight of the coast of Portugal, and in another four and twenty hours she was anchored at the mouth of the Tagus, and soon after beside the great quay of Lisbon, and Dennis was at his journey's end.

Here, in this strange land, no one would know him, no one question him. He might live out his life as best he could, no one would seek to meddle with him. All were strangers to him and he to them, and it was with a strange sort of reluctance he bid adieu to the rough captain of the little vessel and walked away into the city.

He hardly perceived the crowd of dark-faced, strangely costumed people around him, as he walked through the narrow, unaccustomed streets, nor heard the babel of voices talking and vociferating around him in foreign tongues. His eyes had fallen on a face that had sent a cold thrill of almost superstitious terror through his heart, a face like the face of his dead wife, and the great dark eyes had looked into his with a reproachful sadness.

With a pre-occupied mind and slow, weary footsteps he wandered carelessly along, till he found himself outside the gates of the city, and the country spreading far and wide before him, with the river and the deep blue sea beyond the town in the distance.

"Where is the senor going?" asked a voice in broken English.

And Dennis beheld a tidy-looking woman of the middle classes beside him, who pointed to a house by the wayside which he now perceived to be a country inn.

"If the senor wants a lodging he will not find a better one in Lisbon than here in my house."

Dennis halted, and after a minute's consideration followed the woman, nothing loth, into the house and was presently seated in the shady court in its centre, with fruit, bread, coffee and cigars laid before him for his refreshment.

The people of the inn he found to be good, honest folks. The woman had been in her youth servant in the family of an English merchant, and had so picked up the language which had afterwards proved of no small service to her, for her inn was constantly visited by English travellers on account of their language being understood at it.

And Dennis took up his quarters there and seldom stirred beyond its doors. A deadly lethargy seemed to have fallen on him, and he passed the days ruminating remorsefully over the past.

There were few travellers passing at that time of year, and they were all either Spanish or Portuguese, and with these, from his ignorance of their language, Dennis had little communication, and his life was solitary enough.

But at length, after more than three weeks had passed away, a party of English travellers stopped at the little hotel, and Dennis set eyes on English faces and heard English voices again.

As they sat in the cool, shady court, talking of their journey and other matters, a few words of their conversation reached Dennis, who, concealed from their view by some oleanders and orange trees, which had stood in the court in large green boxes, was but a few yards from them, and at once claimed his attention.

"Have you seen the last papers from home, George?" said one.

"The last! Well, I have seen one a week old or more. That girl is found guilty, you see. I told you it would be so," was the reply.

The words agitated Dennis strangely. He listened eagerly for what would follow.

"Found guilty! But recommended to mercy, of course!"

"Yes, but the capital sentence is to be carried out. The day is fixed for the 16th—just a week hence."

"I wonder if she is really guilty?" said the first speaker.

"Most likely. Why not? The evidence is clear enough," replied the second.

"Poor wretch! I don't doubt she is. She had reason to hate the woman she killed it seems."

Again Dennis felt a chill dread creeping over him, and the cry that had haunted him seemed to ring again in his ears. He listened intently to their talk.

"Yes, she had been badly treated no doubt. They say she's quite young, and very pretty."

"And the murdered woman was young too, though a widow."

"Well," said the first speaker, "I'm glad I wasn't on the jury. That sort of evidence never quite satisfies me. It was all quite circumstantial, you know."

"True, but strong enough for all that."

"Yes, I don't deny it's strong, but yet—"

"Well, my dear fellow, think—the knife—it was hers."

"Yes, but the possibility that it had been stolen from her remains."

"An unlikely possibility, as you'll see if you study the evidence," replied the second speaker.

The knife was hers! The words sounded terrible to him as the crack of doom; a fearful light broke on him. The knife—yes—for the first time he had remembered it—the knife with which he had murdered his wife was Hilda's. Good God! could it be she whom they were talking about?

There was a silence for a minute or two between the speakers—minutes that appeared ages to Dennis—and then they resumed their talk.

"It's a pretty part of the country where the murder took place."

"Yes, it is; never was that way. What was the name of the place? I forget."

"Hartford, in D—shire, not far from Yarborough, you know," was the reply.

A mist came before Dennis's eyes, the ground seemed to be giving way under his feet, and the voices now sounded to him as if they came from afar off.

"I even think I must have seen Stoneyvale—Vanstone's house. I must have driven past it going into Hartford, I imagine."

"What's the name of the woman?" asked the other, carelessly.

Dennis Vanstone's heart almost ceased beating as he waited for the reply.

"Her name! Rather a curious one. Let's see. Ah! here it is—Miss Ray. Yes, Hilda Ray. She is to be hung on Thursday week."

Hilda Ray to be hung—and for the crime he had done!—for the murder of his wife!

The idea froze his blood with horror. Was there no end to the misery he was destined to bring on those who loved him best?

"A curious thing is," murmured the other, "that he—Vanstone—the murdered woman's husband, you know, was drowned in that fearful wreck, you remember—the wreck of that Australian ship, the *Bertha*, only a fortnight before. What a terrible affair that was—only two out of all the crew and passengers saved!"

"Yes, I remember it—somewhere off the Land's End, wasn't it? Poor fellow! Rather a tragical ending for a young couple. Now, George, let's go inside."

Dennis started to his feet.

"May I beg the loan of your English newspaper, sir, for a few minutes?" he asked.

The gentleman looked in surprise at being addressed in his own language.

"Certainly, sir; here are several," he said. "I did not know we had a compatriot staying in the hotel."

Dennis bowed silently, took the papers from his countryman's hand, and, seating himself at

the other side of the court, began eagerly to search for the story of the trial.

He found it soon enough, and was in a moment deep in all the awful details of the murder.

Hilda! Hilda! He must save her—save her from the terrible doom that had been pronounced on her and proclaim himself the murderer. Not a moment was to be lost. Hilda, his pure darling!

It was her voice, then, that he had heard, and which had haunted him ever since—her voice. No wonder that fearful cry had been ever-present with him since he fled from the face of his dead wife! Hilda had seen him and knew he was her murderer, and had lain down her life for him.

He saw it at a glance plainly enough. From her great love for him she had been silent—had allowed judgment to go against her rather than betray him.

Ah! here was love indeed, and she might have been his—his wife, if it had not been for that other—no; if it had not been for his own hasty temper and blind jealousy.

What a fearful muddle he had made of his life! How he had destroyed his own happiness and hers! But she must be saved. There was yet time. He must be off, and without a word he hurried from the inn and down the steep road towards the steamer office.

No steamer was starting that day, but on the morrow he learnt one would sail, which would in all probability reach England on the evening before the day fixed for the execution. He might be in time, but it would be a chance. A storm—an adverse wind or tide or current, might detain them, and then Hilda would be lost.

He wandered restlessly about the town till dark, his heart full of remorse and misgivings. What she must have suffered! What she must be suffering still! His thoughts were maddening.

He pictured her to himself standing in the felon's dock without a friend to aid or comfort her, facing the crowd of eager, curious spectators, listening to the words of witnesses, whose every saying was noted down and brought to bear against her, and whose tales were dragging her on to destruction. How helpless and forlorn and terrified she must have felt before her stern, callous judges—she, so young, and gentle, and tender! And he was the cause of it all.

The thought was agony irrepressible to him, and like a madman he wandered up and down the steep streets and lanes, with such a tumult of passion raging within him as threatened, indeed, to deprive him of reason for a time.

The long night at length passed away and morning dawned. He watched the sun as he rose, and noted with eagerness that the wind was fresh and blew in a favourable direction for their voyage, and he was speedily up and on his way to the harbour, from which the vessel would start.

At the last he thought of money, and, looking into his pocket-book, found he had just enough left to pay his way home, and then he would be a beggar. But what mattered that to him now? His days were numbered; the world and all it contained was of little account to him now. He had but one more deed to do, and then to die.

His sudden departure caused some remark in the little inn.

"Who was the Englishman who left you this morning, senora?" asked the elder of the two travellers of the landlady.

"I do not know, sir," she replied. "He has been here nearly a month, and we have had no conversation together. He was a silent man—very sullen, quiet, and respectable enough, but I think he had some trouble, sir, for he always looked so grave and sad, and at night I could hear him tossing and groaning in his sleep."

"Ah! very probably; he was a wild, curious-looking fellow. His speech was better than his appearance, though from the one I should have judged him to be a man of tolerable education, but from the other a common sailor. Where

did he come from, senora? Did he tell you that?"

"Ah! yes; from England, certainly, in the *San José*, commanded by Don Antonio Santander. I know him well," she answered.

"Well, he's on his way back again now, senora. See, there is the steamer out at sea already," and he pointed in the direction of the sea with his gun, on which amongst many a white-sailed ship could be seen the steamer, making quickly for the open ocean.

"Well," said the senora, with a sigh, "he has my blessing, and may Heaven send him peace," and she crossed herself devoutly and turned away to re-enter the house, whilst her guest and his friend, shouldering their guns, walked away into the country to enjoy a day's shooting, their favourite sport, for which they had made the journey to Spain.

"I wonder if that fellow saw anything in the papers we lent him that made him set off so suddenly," said one later on in the day. "Somehow I cannot get the man's face out of my head; it was so wild and stern."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow," replied the other. "There was nothing of earthly interest to anyone in those papers but that murder."

And they sat down beneath an olive tree to rest, and Dennis was forgotten.

CHAPTER XXI.

Surely the golden hours are turning grey
And dance no more and vainly strive to run.

The *Cordova* steamed quickly away from Lisbon, wind and weather being in her favour. The sea was calm as glass, and all gave prospect of a swift and pleasant voyage.

The passengers lounged lazily about the decks under a double awning, and laughed, talked, and flirted at their ease.

Dennis alone was gloomy and morose. The jest and laughter of the passengers grated on his feelings, their happy faces and gay speeches were offensive to him, and any attempt at friendliness or companionship he utterly repelled. Lonely and miserable, his heart full of one harrowing fear, and feeling that if they but knew him all would shrink from him with horror instead of seeking his acquaintance, he refused all intercourse with his fellows, and with remorse for ever gnawing at his heart waited impatiently for the voyage to come to its termination.

"What a strange, wild face that man has," whispered a lady passenger to her friend. "I think I never saw such a sad look on any mortal's countenance before. I wonder what his history might be, for some history he has, and a sad one too."

"What, that tall, dark man in the sailor's dress? Why do you think so? But yes, now you mention it, he has a remarkable face. He never seems to notice anyone, but always to be in the clouds, thinking of something a long way off, as it were. A handsome face too, but what sad, haunting eyes," replied the other.

"I should like to know his history, to speak to him, but I'm afraid," said the first. "Charles says he shuns everyone, and will hardly answer if spoken to. All to-day he has been sitting there by the capstan looking dreamily out to sea, and I don't think he has spoken a word or even altered his position. Poor fellow, what's wrong with him, I wonder?"

"Is he English?" asked the first.

"English? Oh, yes, I believe so; he speaks good English, at any rate, for I heard him."

"Perhaps he's a runaway, there are plenty of such in Lisbon, I believe."

"But in that case he wouldn't be returning to England. No, depend on it, he's met with some terrible trouble and is heart-broken, poor man!"

Her companion laughed lightly. "Always romantic, my dear Clara. Perhaps, on the contrary, he's robbed a bank, or committed a burglary, or—something of that sort, and now he's repentant and—"

"If he's repenting I should pity him," returned the other, with another glance of her soft grey

eyes in Dennis's direction. "By the way, you read the account of that dreadful murder in England a few weeks ago? Oh! how could a young girl like that commit such a deed? It is too horrible."

And then they talked over the Hartford murder, little dreaming that the real culprit was within a few yards of them and heard their words as they paced up and down the deck, weighing the evidence against Hilda, and condemning her for the crime of which he was guilty—he whom they had been pitying but a few moments before for the sorrow and remorse that crime was making him suffer.

For the first five days of the voyage the weather was splendid, a light but favourable wind blew, and the Cordova flew like an arrow through the deep blue waters. England, it seemed, in all probability would be reached on the morning of the fifteenth, and in that case Dennis would be in time.

Under these circumstances a look of eager anticipation began to take the place of the expression of intense despair that had at first filled his countenance, and he took to pacing restlessly up and down the broad white deck, and making constant inquiries as to the way made every few hours by the steamer.

"You seem mighty anxious to be at your journey's end, sir," said the captain, jokingly, to him one day as he for the third or fourth time made inquiries as to the ship's progress.

"Yes, sir," replied Dennis, gravely, "more anxious than you can well imagine. It is a matter of life and death to me literally, sir, to arrive in England on the fifteenth."

The captain eyed him with a look of interest.

"You've a good chance for life then, sir, if the weather only holds," he replied. "We shall be in early on the fifteenth, I reckon."

"For life!" murmured Dennis, with a strange smile. "For life!"

And he turned away and began pacing the deck again, whilst the captain with a knowing wink at his first officer, laid his finger significantly on his forehead.

"A screw loose there, Walters, eh?" said he.

"More than one I guess, sir," replied the first officer. "He's a queer customer, and no mistake. However, he's likely to get his wish, as you say, captain. We've made a fine run to-day."

And the two walked away together to the captain's cabin to compare notes.

But the fair weather was not destined to last till the voyage's end, for scarcely had the first glimpse been caught of the English coast than the wind changed, the sea became rough, rain fell in torrents, and the decks were soon cleared of their throng of fair-weather sailors, who were thankful to seek the quietude of their cabins below from the pelting of the rain and the blustering of the keen, cold wind on deck.

Dennis still remained above, the picture of despair.

"When shall we reach Southampton, captain?" he inquired, with almost agonised anxiety.

"Southampton, my dear sir? Well, if this wind continues not before the sixteenth at earliest, later may be; it's blowing a gale against us now, sir."

Dennis groaned. Not before the sixteenth! Too late, too late! and he wrung his hands as he turned from the captain with a wild, despairing look, and staggered to the nearest seat.

"Come, cheer up, my lad," said the good-natured sailor. "The wind may change, and then we'll be in twelve hours earlier; don't despair," and he clapped him on the back cheerfully.

"Please Heaven," muttered Dennis. "There's more at stake than you imagine. A life—a human life will be sacrificed if I do not reach England before Thursday."

"Well," replied the captain, looking at him curiously, "we'll do our best to help you, but wind and weather cares for no man."

And he went aft to consult the barometer.

"Glass rising," he shouted, cheerily, as he

passed Dennis, standing leaning against the bulwarks with a despairing countenance, "keep up your heart, old fellow."

But the storm blew still, fiercely and wildly, and the Cordova battled hard with the great, white-crested waves that advanced towards her in heaving, tumbling rows and dashed themselves fiercely against her panting sides, causing her to shiver and groan like a living thing.

The wind whistled through the rigging in shrill discord, and the blinding spray flew in thick clouds over the streaming deck, and the night settled down dark and dull.

Southampton was still many a mile distant. Would it be reached ere the fatal day, or not?

Towards midnight the gale seemed to increase in fury, and the white-crested waves washed over and over the Cordova's deck mercilessly.

"A bit of a gale," shouted the captain in Dennis's ear, as he hurried past him, "a bit of a gale."

And as he spoke a great, green wave towered above them and then broke, deluging the decks and carrying away the seats and other small moveables, whilst the men clung hard to the skylights and rigging to save themselves from being washed overboard.

"A rough night," cried the mate, in stentorian tones, as he rushed past Dennis, "but the worst's over now, the weather's breaking."

And he was right. The clouds began to part, and when the morning dawned the wind lulled and the Cordova steamed heavily through a throbbing, palpitating sea, rapidly settling down after the gale into an almost perfect calm.

So broke the morning of the fifteenth, and to Dennis's eager question the captain returned answer that in all probability they would be in port by five o'clock that afternoon.

By five! Would there be sufficient time to reach Yarrowburgh? Would it be possible to get there before half-past eight the next morning? It was a long journey and he was ignorant of how the trains ran.

Eagerly he leant over the taffrail and strained his eyes towards the coast, and gallantly the Cordova steamed on, past the Needles that raised their pointed white cliffs from out the now smiling sea, and glittered in the light of the mid-day sun, whilst the sea birds flew around and above them in immense flocks, and screamed and whistled in the air as they darted and whirled hither and thither around the steep cliffs and past the coast of the Isle of Wight, with its white cliffs and green downs, into Southampton water, and the voyage was over.

Without losing a moment Dennis was on board the steam-tug that was in readiness to convey the passengers to Southampton, and waited in a silent agony of impatience till they had all been taken on board together with their belongings, and the steamer was ready to set off on her way to the docks.

Once on shore he set off to the railway station and inquired the time the next train would start that would set him on his way towards Yarrowburgh, and found that in half an hour one would be leaving that would take him as far as D—, from whence another line would convey him to Yarrowburgh. It would reach that place by eight o'clock.

Dennis would have but half an hour, if the train kept true to its time, to save Hilda.

Nervously and impatiently he paced up and down the station, and his eye lighting on the newspapers at the book-stall he eagerly seized one and began searching through it to see if any mention were made in it of the Hartford murder.

He found it mentioned, but learnt nothing new from what he read. The execution was fixed for half-past eight next morning, and that was all the paragraph told.

It appeared hours to him before the train started. Would the passengers never stop coming in? Would the whistle never sound?

A few moments' delay even might be fatal to Hilda. Would they never be off?

He looked half angrily at the calm, unruffled features of his fellow-passengers as they sat quietly in their places and made themselves comfortable for their journey and talked and chatted unconcernedly.

He felt as if their calm was an injury to himself, as if they were human beings without heart or compassion to be so calm and cheerful, whilst he was nigh dying with impatience to be gone.

At length the last passenger, hot and flushed, took his place, and the whistle sounded, the last door banged to, and the train was in motion, and with a sigh of relief Dennis leant back in his seat and closed his eyes, as if to shut out from his gaze the past and future, as well as all around him in the present.

"Strange! during the whole of his voyage the thought of his own end—so terribly near—had never for a moment troubled him. For once he had forgotten self entirely, and it was for Hilda alone he thought and cared, and for her salvation he worked, regardless of what fate might befall him."

She was his only thought. Remorse for his crime even had died away, the anxiety for her safety, the intense longing to save her from the consequences of her own act of self-devotion and of his crime, left no room for other feelings in his heart.

After a couple of hours' travelling he arrived at D— and left the train he was in, and inquired for the next to Yarrowburgh.

"At 4.30 to-morrow, sir," replied the man. "Take you to Yarrowburgh by eight o'clock, sir. Inn, sir? Yes, sir, there be the Railway Inn, not fifty yards off. Convenient for an early start. Good rooms there, sir."

So Dennis bent his weary footsteps to the inn and sat waiting for the morning in the bedroom shown him, without so much as thinking of rest or sleep.

Sleep! Would this eager, restless anxiety ever allow him to sleep again?

This was the second night he had passed without sleeping, and he felt no inclination for repose; but his heavy, blood-shot eyes and pallid face showed how the wear and strain of the last ten days were telling on him. He looked aged and thin, and lines of silver could be traced in his once raven locks.

"Will she recognise me? Will they know me again, I wonder?" he muttered, as he caught sight of his altered visage and strange attire in the glass. "They will think it is my ghost come back to trouble them, I fancy," and he smiled grimly as he looked at his unkempt beard and shaggy locks and sea-stained garments and thought of the care and pains he had been wont to bestow on his personal appearance in other days, when Hilda was his promised wife, and he delighted to appear brave and handsome in her sight.

And she? She was wearing a prison dress now, and he shuddered at the thought and looked at the clock once more, longing for the weary night to pass and for the train to start.

It seemed as if the dawn would never break, and again and again he drew aside his window curtain and gazed out eastward.

All was dark, and profound silence reigned around, even in the busy station yard, where till a late hour of the night a gang of workmen had been hammering away at a heap of sleepers, and the porters had been wearily assisting at the shunting of a number of goods trucks.

No, it was not morning yet, and as he shut the curtains again he heard the distant clock in the village church strike three.

Another hour and a half before the train would be in. How could he wait it out in inactivity? He stole downstairs and out into the cool night, and walked up and down the front of the inn till the arrival of a porter from a neighbouring cottage told him that the day was at hand and its work beginning, and the clock struck four.

"Cold morning, sir," said the porter, as Dennis came on to the platform. "Where for, sir?"



[A TERRIBLE AWAKENING.]

"Yarborough," replied Dennis.

"Ah, yes—4.30, sir. An execution there to-day, sir. Daresay you've read of the Hartford murder, sir?"

Dennis shivered and turned abruptly away. Was the man human or a brute to speak of it in that light tone?

"Queer fellow that," murmured the porter. "Who can he be? Comes from foreign parts, I guess, and they haven't improved his manners," and the man looked curiously after Dennis, as he walked to the other side of the platform and sat down on the bench in a corner, as if he wished to be left undisturbed.

More passengers were arriving, and soon the little station was full.

"Plenty of travellers to-day, Jones," said a rosy farmer.

"Yes, sir. Mostly going in to see the execution, sir," replied the glib porter.

"The execution," he answered. "Ah! yes; dear me! I had forgotten. We shall get in just in time for it. Bad sight, my man—brutalises the public. Can't think how a man can go to witness such a thing."

"Many takes an interest in this one, sir," replied the porter. "The prisoner was well known in the county, sir, and there's some as won't believe even now as how she did it, and, indeed, for that, sir, I don't see it's proved. The laws want altering, sir, sadly, in my opinion. I wouldn't hang women at all, sir, bless ye. We all knows they haven't got no control over themselves at times. Here's the train, sir," and the communicative official hurried off to ring the bell.

"Five minutes after time, as usual," muttered the farmer as he took his seat in the same carriage as Dennis. "We shan't get to Yarborough till ten minutes past eight, at least. They're always late on this line."

Dennis heard him and looked anxiously across the carriage at him.

"We shall be picking up all sorts of riff-raff on the way, early as it is, to take to this execution. Hope they will all be too late for it."

Such exhibitions should be put a stop to—don't you think so, sir?" he continued, appealing to Dennis.

"Certainly," he replied. "Is it far from the station to the place of execution?" he added, in a choking voice.

"A quarter of an hour's walk, sir. I shan't trouble it," he replied. "Such things must be, we are told, but it's a terrible necessity, sir. A horrible thing, as it seems to me, to launch an immortal soul into eternity, sir, crimeladen and unrepentant, perhaps," and he paused.

Dennis nodded again and the farmer continued:

"That's a question for the parsons you'll be saying, perhaps; but it is one that a layman may well ask. Moreover, in many cases, such an amount of uncertainty hangs over the evidence that one pities the judge who has to condemn and the jury who have to convict."

"And often—very often, I fancy—they are wrong—judge and jury too," said Dennis, half to himself—half to his companion.

"Ay! indeed. Have you met with a case of false conviction in the course of your experience?" asked the man, eagerly, and the passengers looked at Dennis inquiringly.

"Yes," replied Dennis, "I know of one—this girl, for instance, who is to be hung," and he shuddered, "this morning. She is not guilty."

"Not guilty, sir," interposed another passenger, who had been listening with interest to the conversation. "Why, the evidence against her was clear enough to all."

"To all?" replied Dennis. "Perhaps, but not to me. The girl is innocent."

And his dark, wild face flushed eagerly.

"Well, sir, excuse me," answered the stranger, "one can only speak after one's own convictions. To me the evidence seems clear and convincing. There was a plain chain of facts brought to light and evidence of malice as well, sufficient to satisfy most minds as to her guilt—Ah! here we are!"

And he broke off as the train drew up at the ticket platform.

"A quarter past eight!" said the farmer, looking at his watch.

"What!—what hour?" cried Dennis.

"A quarter past eight," repeated the man.

"God help me," cried Dennis, springing out of the carriage. "I shall be too late."

And before they had time to prevent him he had rushed from the ticket platform across the line, and was flying wildly through the streets of Yarborough, towards the place of execution.

"A bit gone in the head, I guess," said the farmer, knowingly.

"Seems in a violent hurry. What is it he is sure to be late for, I wonder?" replied the other.

"The execution, I suppose. Looks a queer rough sort of man; but how one human being can take a pleasure in witnessing the death of another beats me. It's monstrous—inexplicable."

And the train having now arrived at the station the passengers descended, collected their luggage, and in a few minutes more were streaming out into the open streets of the town.

There was a steady movement in the direction of the jail and beyond it, to a piece of rising ground, where a dark something was erected, around which was gathered a crowd of human beings, the hum of whose mingled voices could be heard from afar off, and in all the windows of the many houses overlooking the spot where this dark something was erected sat groups of sight-seers eager to witness the last moments of a fellow-creature and to gloat over the death struggles of an unfortunate culprit, for it was to the gallows on which Hilda Ray was to suffer to which the footsteps of the struggling stream of humanity were tending, and around which men, women, and children even, had stationed themselves, and it was over her death they had gathered themselves together to exult and to feast their cruel eyes and depraved appetite for sensation on her dying agonies.

(To be Continued.)

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[DEFEATED.]

LAURA'S LOVE.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE INFORMATION.

It was warm summer weather, and the "London Company of Celebrated Stars" were doing bad business at Sleepyville. In stage parlance the "ghost had not walked," or in ordinary English the profits were so scant that the actors and actresses had to content themselves with less than half the usual salaries.

Among the small, openly yawning audience was a fashionably-dressed young man, who wandered about behind the boxes and up and down the dusty staircases as if at a loss to know what to do with himself.

He entered the so-called saloon and exchanged a few civil words with the custodian of the bar, a mournful young lady, who reigned over half a dozen ginger-beer bottles and some fossil-like buns.

Walter Atholstone sighed as he retraced his footsteps to the front of the house, attracted there by the violent scraping of three fiddles, and took his seat to watch the progress of the second act of the "Model Farm."

The acting was poor in the extreme, save in one or two instances; but among the company was a young man who took the part of the spendthrift and prodigal, and he seemed to throw his heart and soul into the piece.

It was not acting, but reality. He shed real tears, sank in silent repentance at his old mother's feet, and Walter Atholstone was moved.

"I should like to make the acquaintance of that man," he murmured, as the curtain hid the stage from view for the last time. "Let me see

what he calls himself on the bill—Mr. Hubert Mountray. Humph! Well, I will endeavour to see what you are like, Mr. Mountray, when not strutting the boards."

Walter Atholstone smiled as he lit a fragrant cigar and took up his station at the stage door. He smiled at the folly of wishing to see the actions of a man he knew nothing about, and yet he seemed to be bound up with the passionate young actor in some way he could not account for.

Atholstone had never seen him before, and had not even taken the trouble to read his name on the bill until the play was half over, but he was cooling his heels on the uneven pavement and waiting the appearance of a man in whom he had taken an interest bewildering and inexplicable to himself.

Full half an hour passed away, and Walter Atholstone, thinking there was some other way out of the theatre, was about to turn away when the sound of voices and hurrying of footsteps attracted his attention.

Three men emerged from the door, one of them being the object of Atholstone's search. Mr. Hubert Mountray, divested of his stage attire, presented a spectacle of sadness. His clothes were shabby, his boots down at the heel, and his hat had evidently passed through a long series of misfortunes, brought about by the combined influence of sunshine and bad weather.

Mountray and his companions crossed over the road and entered a neat, very attractive inn, bearing the sign of The Shakespeare Tavern, and after waiting a minute or two Walter Atholstone followed them.

He found himself in a parlour filled with the fumes of smoke and beer, and the atmosphere was so thick and unwholesome that he could scarcely discern the faces of some dozen men, who sat upon benches ranged round the wall.

A silence fell upon the noisy talkers as Atholstone took a seat. The shining lights of the theatrical profession eyed him narrowly and whispered among themselves, but finding he

was not to be driven out by withering glances they resumed their conversation.

"Well, Betterton," said Mountray, "what sort of house did you count to-night?"

"Worse than last," was the grumbling reply. "Cooper swears he will close if things don't improve before Saturday."

Mr. Hubert Mountray leaned forward, and placing his hands on his knees appeared to ponder deeply on the sad state of things.

"This is a nice look out," he said. "I am sure I do not know what the public want for their money. Our stranger friend," he added, glancing at Atholstone, "witnessed the performance to-night, and I ask him without fear what he thinks of it."

"I am but a poor judge," Walter Atholstone replied. "For my own part I was well pleased."

"Oh, bother this discussion!" broke in a younger member of the company. "You are always grumbling about the public taste, Mountray. Why don't you go home and marry the girl you rave about so often?"

Hubert Mountray started to his feet.

"Look here, Groome," he hissed, as his face darkened, "if you say another word on that subject I will knock your head against the wall!"

The landlord of The Shakespeare Tavern, hearing high words, promptly put a stop to them by closing the shutters and ordering everybody out of the house.

"In the name of common sense what good have I done?" Walter Atholstone muttered, savagely, as he wended his way through the narrow, tortuous street leading to the marketplace, and his hotel. "I expected to see a highly-cultured man, and found a pot-house cad; and yet how could such a fellow display sentiment and feeling in such a part? Mr. Mountray, in a private sense, is more astonishing to me than the actor. Perhaps it is his only part. What a fool I am to give him a second thought!"

The hot mid-day sun twenty-four hours later found Walter Atholstone standing waiting for the ferry which was to convey him to the village of Barlygreen.

Atholstone was one of those young gentlemen who, with plenty of money, hardly knew how to spend it and his time, and roved about from place to place in search of novelty.

There are perhaps few prettier villages in England than Barlygreen. A curious old church of doubtful period, and still more doubtful style of architecture, peeps from behind a cluster of trees and looks down upon cottages and farmhouses.

A sparkling stream, pure as crystal, laughs its way to the ocean, and the surrounding hills, celebrated for their rich clothing of verdure, make up a grand picture.

A hired pony chaise had brought Walter Atholstone from the nearest railway station to the ferry, and, waiting for the boat, the handsome young man gazed at the distant village, bathed in the glow of the setting sun, and felt his heart grow light with the levelness of the scene.

The young man who had driven Atholstone from the station was a matter-of-fact young person. Atholstone found this out from his reply when he called attention to the grandeur of the sky.

He said that rain would fall before morning, and as old Myers had not got his corn up yet, the change in the weather would drive him to a state bordering on madness.

Who was Myers?

Well, he was a big man in his way. He wasn't a gentleman, anyway, nor a squire, though he thought himself one, and bullied his people when he had the gout.

Did Myers live at Barlygreen?

Oh, yes, he did, and lots wished he didn't, especially Miss Laura Felixtowe, who, having a sweetheart of her own somewhere or the other, did not want to be bothered with the attentions of a crusty old bachelor.

The boat arrived at the landing-stage, and Walter Atholstone, having parted with his informant, soon stood at the door of John Minery's farmhouse, half of which he had engaged for the space of six weeks.

Mrs. Minery, a rosy, buxom woman, came forth to greet the tourist, as he first supposed, but never a word said she. The good creature glared at him and at his luggage, and finally dashed into the house and screamed for "Riar."

This was depressing, and so strong a sense of the ridiculous crept over Walter Atholstone that he felt inclined to decamp, but Riar, or more properly speaking Maria, a red-faced, angular girl, reasoned him.

She shouldered his luggage with ease, and pushing a door on the right hand side of the hall, said:

"That's the parlour, sir, and I'll show you the bedroom if you'll follow me."

Having satisfied himself that all was clean and tidy, Atholstone determined to make the best of the somewhat hard-looking furniture, and likewise of Maria, who waited at table for him.

The expression on the girl's face was one suppressed giggle, and when informed that her services were no longer required she indulged in a spasmodic skip, and laid violent hands on the dinner things.

Walter Atholstone laughed as he lit a cigar and threw himself into the easy chair, but he was not to be left long in peace.

"Come in," he said, in answer to a knock at the door.

And Mrs. Minery entered the room.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" she said, rubbing her hands softly. "I did not expect you till the last train, and when I saw you I was rather taken aback, being a sufferer of spasms from a girl."

"Thank you, Mrs. Minery, I require nothing more," Atholstone replied, controlling his features with an effort. "Stay. I should like to see your husband when he comes in, as I wish to

ask him a few questions about the neighbourhood."

John Minery, who came in due course, was a broad-shouldered fellow, light-haired and simple-faced, and answered the questions put to him satisfactorily.

He was shy and nervous until Atholstone insisted that he should stay and smoke a cigar, and then he came out with information on which this story hinges.

"I'm glad to let part of the place for a time, sir," he said. "Me, the missus, and Riar don't want half of it, and a little ready cash is handy. Figs will die, sir, and so will calves, like men and such things. Ah, sir, last winter we had much to do to keep the roof over our heads."

Walter Atholstone uttered a few words of sympathy, and John Minery became more confident than ever.

"I am telling you the truth, sir," he said. "You know the world, so I can talk to you. It does my heart good. I have a son who grew up with high notions in his head. This place wasn't good enough for him, and the only thing he made himself good for was to order other people about and do his best to break his mother's heart. I say it, though my own heart is almost breaking to see him."

"What does he do? Why, goes to London with a hundred pounds in his pocket. What next? He gets stage-struck, and some rascal persuaded him that he was a genius, got every penny the silly boy had saved, and left him to starve in a country town."

"I found this out afterwards. I suppose he was too proud to let his old father and mother know that he wanted bread, and he went from bad to worse, I suppose, preferring the life of a vagabond to following the plough."

"Sometimes we get a letter from different parts of the country, but he never talks of coming back, and he never writes to the girl who is dying for him—Laura Felixtowe. Good night, sir. I am much obliged to you for listening so patiently to me. Good night, sir."

As John Minery closed the door, Walter Atholstone's half-finished cigar slipped from his fingers and lay heedless upon the hearth-rug.

"What a small world this is," he said. "The curtain of a new play is about to rise. Have I been sitting face to face with the father of Hubert Mountray? Has fate brought me down here to witness a drama of real life? Laura Felixtowe! It is a pretty name. I wonder what she is like!"

CHAPTER II.

WALTER ATHOLSTONE FINDS A COMPANION.

WALTER ATHOLSTONE was not an artist in the true sense of the word, but he was extremely fond of sketching, and to his delight found plenty of opportunities to satisfy his desire at Barlygreen and its surroundings.

The locality was one of pleasant surprises, and on the following evening he came upon a gem of a cottage, smothered with ivy, honeysuckle, and roses.

Its sides were flanked by orchards, a paddock occupied by a fat pony, and a number of indolent ducks ran at the rear, and the front of this veritable bower was rendered still more charming by a strip of verdure interspersed with neatly tended flower-beds.

The air was fragrant with musk and lemon-scented verbenas, and in the silence of the evening Walter Atholstone stood, half ashamed of himself for lingering so long, wondering and even anxious to know what kind of people had hidden themselves away in such a cosy nest.

At all events, there would be no harm in asking permission to sketch so pretty a spot, and Atholstone's hand was on the gate when he withdrew it with a start as the sound of a piano accompanying a sweet voice reached his ears.

The voice was so pure and enchanting that Atholstone seemed riveted to the ground, but the spell broke as it ceased, and he was about to hurry away when a lady, followed by a demonstrative little terrier, entered the garden.

"Pardon me," Atholstone stammered, as he lifted his hat, "I fear you must think me very rude. I have been looking at your charming house and grounds, indeed I was about to ask if I might make a sketch as a memento of my visit to Barlygreen."

"I am sure you are very welcome," was the reply. "My Aunt Jane will be as pleased as I to have our humble little home so honoured."

The speaker was a beautiful blonde, graceful in every movement, tender in speech. Her eyes were of fathomless blue, her wavy hair struggled to escape imprisonment from the neat French cap, and two or three truant ringlets had already succeeded.

Clad in white, relieved by a slender gold chain and locket, Laura Felixtowe, standing with the glory of the declining sun upon her, became an angel in Walter Atholstone's eyes.

There was a sorrow of no common nature written upon her face.

She was pale, and seemed far from well, and a shadow drove the momentary smile away, and her fingers twitched nervously at the locket.

"Here is aunt," she said, as she received Atholstone's thanks. "Dear Aunt Jane, this gentleman is staying—"

"At Mr. Minery's farm," said Walter Atholstone. "I presume I am addressing Miss Laura Felixtowe?"

The elder lady, whose unwrinkled brow and rich, dark hair told of a happy and contented life, touched the girl lightly on the shoulder.

"Indeed," she said. "The Minerys are nice people in their way, and I am sure they will make you comfortable. Mr.—Mr. Atholstone, we are country people, and dine early. Perhaps, as you will not have finished your sketch, you will dine with us at two to-morrow?"

Walter Atholstone expressed himself delighted, as indeed he was, and the morning found him there with an array of sketching blocks and artists' materials.

But the lightness of touch seemed to have left his fingers, and he sat staring vaguely at the cottage for fully a quarter of an hour before he made a single stroke, and it was not until Laura Felixtowe joined him that he went to work in earnest.

"You prefer country to town life," she said. "Mr. Atholstone, if I am a judge of character, you have a contempt for the scenes and pleasures of the busy world."

"I can see more marvels in a simple flower than in the grandest spectacle designed by man," Walter Atholstone replied. "Even as I sit here I have been led into a train of thought. A few evenings ago chance took me to the theatre of a country town, and the play was one of country life. And yet what a wretched mockery it was. Yellow gas for the light of the blessed sun, hideously-painted pasteboard for the foliage, the scraping of violins for the grateful songs of birds."

"You have no admiration for the dramatic art?"

"Yes, but I have often longed to see whether men and women who claim our sympathy on the stage could do so by their powers of mimicry in real life. See what I am doing myself. I am endeavouring to make a picture of the cottage. What a poor and miserable resemblance to the reality! Say that I took this away a hundred miles, and show it to somebody who has gazed upon the house. A hundred faults would be found with my poor attempt, but it might receive praise by those unacquainted with the place. So it is with the actor. We applaud his studied speech and gestures. They are real to us until we come face to face with the man in private life, and learn to our disgust that he is a fraud on human nature."

There was a short period of silence after these words.

"Mr. Atholstone," Laura Felixtowe cried, "you did not speak in that strain without reason?"

"I confess it," said Walter Atholstone.

"Mr. Minery has been speaking to you?"

"Again I confess. He has."

Walter Atholstone did not look up, but he

felt that the girl's eyes were flashing scornfully on him.

"Does it not strike you as ungentlemanly and cruel that you, a stranger here, should hint at what you have heard of my history?" she said.

The pencil trembled between his fingers for a moment, and then he put it down.

"Miss Felixtowe," he said, "I bow to your judgment. I beg your pardon humbly. I had no intention of hurting your feelings, but with my own eyes I have seen the man you cling in your heart to, the man who neglects you, the man who has sunk lower and lower, and who does not care to raise himself even for the sake of your love. I saw the passion in his face when one of his boon companions hinted that he should return to you, return to you with the scent of the tap-room and vile tobacco clinging to his clothes, return to you with his stage airs, that you, worthy of a better man, might even stoop to conquer such as he. I saw all this struggling within him. I saw that he would willingly do so but for something that had passed between you and prevented it. Bid me leave you, bid me never see your face again, but do not accuse me of unkindness of motive. I desire to be your friend."

"God knows I need one," Laura Felixtowe said, as tears welled into her eyes. "Mr. Atholstone, you have not spoken to me without reason: I believe in your friendship. I feel as if I had known you for years. I will speak plainly to you. I will hide nothing, but you must promise me faithfully to keep the secret from my aunt."

Walter Atholstone inclined his head. "I will keep the secret in my heart of heart," he said.

Laura Felixtowe was about to speak when an elderly gentleman put in an appearance.

"Mr. Myers here again," Laura Felixtowe muttered, impatiently. "Aunt Jane will surely ask him to dine with us. How I wish that man would keep out of my sight."

Mr. Sowerby Myers was a pompous-looking individual, stout, florid and fussy.

He bowed gravely to Laura Felixtowe and turned a not very amiable glance on Walter Atholstone.

"Good morning, Laura," said Mr. Myers, strutting to and fro. "Ah! having a picture of your house—waste of money, I assure you. Where's your aunt? Here she is. How do you do, madam?"

"Our friend, Mr. Atholstone, does not paint for money," Laura Felixtowe said, warmly.

"No?" returned Mr. Myers, "then it is a waste of time on his part. But there, I beg pardon. How do you do, sir? Did you notice those fields of wheat as you came along? They are mine, sir, and I ask you as a sensible man if you ever saw such crops?"

"I love the country, but have no taste for agriculture," Walter Atholstone replied. "I candidly confess that I could not tell oats from barley if I saw them growing earlier in the season."

"Bless my life, this is a very dreadful state of things," Mr. Myers gasped. "When I was your age I was up with the lark and to bed with the sun. I am one of the old style of gentlemen farmers, and I may say without self-flattery that I am one of the last of a noble race. Put away those paints and pencils and take to agriculture."

"I am afraid I cannot see my way clear to take your advice," Walter Atholstone replied, smiling behind his hand. "I thank you, nevertheless, and shall be pleased if any time you can throw a light on matters of which I am dreadfully ignorant."

Atholstone saw that Laura Felixtowe did her best to avoid the pompous individual, who, however, was not to be shaken off.

He swaggered and strutted about to such an extent that Atholstone wished in his heart that the house were his that he might show the troublesome visitor the door.

Mr. Myers was a kind of family ogre. At the dinner-table nobody talked but himself. He put questions and answered them in a breath,

and Walter Atholstone was not sorry when he went home early for fear of catching the dew and a cold.

CHAPTER III.

LAURA FELIXTOWE'S STORY. THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

DARKNESS had fallen upon the peaceful home of the Felixtows. Aunt Jane was dozing quietly, and the young people were left to themselves in the garden.

"The story I have to tell is a short one, and I will confide it to you that you may give me advice," Laura Felixtowe said.

"I feel myself in a rather novel situation," Walter Atholstone replied. "Four and twenty hours back we were strangers, and more than once to-day I felt sorry that I spoke so plainly to you. It must have taken you by surprise?"

"It did," Laura Felixtowe returned; "but when I looked into your eyes I saw good meaning written in every word you uttered. Hear my story and you will know why I am so unhappy while everything seems so fair and bright around me."

"My mother died when I was very young, and at the age of sixteen my father died, leaving me fifteen thousand pounds vested in Government bonds."

"There was a proviso in the will that my aunt, Jane Felixtowe, should reside with me until such time as I should marry, and in that event half the money should go to her."

"John Minery, who has seen better days, was my father's dearest friend; and John Minery the younger and I were playmates."

"Years went on and we learned to love each other—at least, I loved him with all the strength of a woman's heart—and it was arranged that when we were both of age that we should become man and wife."

"Well, time and circumstances went hard with the Minerys. John became sullen, and hated the place of his birth. He aspired to do greater things in the world, and one morning he came to bid me good bye, saying that he would return a man of fortune, or hide himself away in some place where he was unknown."

"Tears and pleadings on my part were alike unavailing."

"Soon after I received a letter from him, full of glow and good spirits. He was studying for the stage, and soon the whole country would ring with his name and fame, but he had spent his little savings, and to accomplish the object of his life he would require a thousand pounds. Nobody has ever heard of this request save yourself, Mr. Atholstone. My lips have been sealed—indeed, his father believed that his son had never sent me a line since the day he left Barly-green."

"The next thing I heard was that he had taken a theatre under an assumed name and failed, but he was not depressed, so his letter said. The wheel of fortune would turn in the right direction, but to recoup himself he must have more money."

"Under the pretence of visiting a friend I went to London and sold out stock to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds. I was of age and had a right to do what I liked with my own. The world would call me weak and foolish, but I loved him and could not rest while he was in want, or, at least, as I thought, a fortune slipping through his fingers."

"How this sum was wasted or squandered I do not know, and for months I heard nothing of him, until at last a letter bearing a foreign postmark reached me. He was in distress again. According to his account he had been robbed by unscrupulous people, but he did not ask for money. He bade me farewell and begged of me to forget him."

"This was but a mere ruse. He knew my heart, and I sent him more money, stating that it must be the last, and giving as my reason the particulars of my father's will. In a few days came another epistle. He acknowledged his failures and his indebtedness to me, but now was the time, he said, for us to settle down. The

world had not been kind to him, and refused to recognise his talent, but he would be satisfied to take me as his wife and to make the best of what remained of my fortune."

"Your Aunt Jane is getting old," he wrote, "and cannot live long. The rest of the money will then fall to you, and we can make up for past reverses."

"I awoke as from a dream. I saw how I had been the victim of a tissue of falsehoods, how this man to whom I had given my heart, and would have given my life, cared nothing for me."

"His heart was in my money, and so long as I continued to supply him with it he would have left me here alone, but when he discovered that I was firm he fell back upon our original engagement and spoke of marriage."

"I replied, in such words as racked my heart to write, that the present circumstances did not admit of our union. He was welcome to what he had had, but he must fight the battle of life himself, and perhaps in years to come he might return to me and take me in his arms as he had done at parting."

"His reply to this was unkind, cruel, and almost brutal. He accused me of selfishness, rebuked me in terms that caused my blood to run cold, and wound up by saying that I was 'no better than others who took a delight in persecuting a man when he is down.'"

"The scoundrel!" Walter Atholstone ejaculated: "Pardon me, Miss Felixtowe, is your story finished?"

"Not quite yet," was the reply. "John Minery forged a bill of exchange. I took it up to save him from imprisonment, and that is the last I heard of him, save from your lips."

"Great Heaven!" Walter Atholstone cried. "What a wretched, sad history. What advice can I give but that you should never give a second thought to such an unworthy wretch? There are many men who would love you for yourself alone."

He touched her hand as he spoke, and she did not remove it. She was crying silently and bitterly, but a sudden movement in the shrubbery caused her to start and dry her eyes quickly.

"We have been overheard," she whispered. "Do you hear me, Mr. Atholstone? There is some person hidden in the garden."

Atholstone rose and searched the place thoroughly, but returned without finding anybody.

"There is nobody here," he said, "it must have been fancy. Miss Felixtowe, it is time that you were in the house and I to pay my respects to your aunt and say good night."

"What a heartless villain that fellow must be!" Walter Atholstone thought, as he walked homeward. "What a thankless dog! Poor girl! she is very lovely in spite of her grief. I wish—Stop, lad, where are you drifting to? Your pictures on canvas are bad enough in all conscience, don't make a fool of yourself by building castles in the air."

But this was just what he was doing.

"Confound John Minery, alias Hubert Mount-ray, mountebank and swindler! what right had he to fall in love with such an angel upon earth as Laura Felixtowe?—and was not her taste also very questionable?"

Atholstone was in no amiable state of mind when he reached Minery's farm, and having shut himself up in his sitting-room he fell back upon a favourite pipe, which had often solaced him and helped him to think calmly.

"Dence take it!" he said. "I almost wish that I had never gone to Sleepyville or come here. The money is gone, the girl is free, but her heart is leal, and I believe that she will never marry while that rascal is alive."

As he spoke he heard the sound of footsteps under the window, and drawing the curtain aside saw the figure of a man prowling around the house, apparently for no good purpose.

The rest of the household had retired, and Atholstone, delighted in the prospect of adventure, stepped out and confronted the stranger.

"Who are you?"

It was the stranger who spoke, and as he re-

cognised the face and voice Atholstone felt his heart thump against his side.

"Mr. Mountray," he said, recovering himself and speaking calmly. "This is our second meeting, but I am surprised to see you here."

"And I you," was the reply. "What business have you in that house?"

"You had better ask Mr. Minery that question," Walter Atholstone replied. "I believe I pay for the use of the rooms, and while I do so they are mine."

"And so the old people have come to this," Atholstone heard the other say. "See here," he added, aloud, "my name is Minery and this is my house. I don't want to rouse my father and mother to-night, but I should like to have a few words with you."

"With all the pleasure in the world," said Atholstone. "Come into the room and you can talk as long as you like without fear of being overheard."

The returned actor looked even more seedy in Atholstone's eyes than he had done on that memorable night at Sleepyville. His clothes were torn and dusty, his boots in patches, and his linen looked as if it had been worn for many a day.

"Well," said Atholstone, leaning his back against the mantel-shelf, "what have you to say to me?"

"In the first I am very thirsty," said Walter Atholstone's rather unwelcome visitor.

"Help yourself," said Atholstone; "and now for secondly."

"How cool you are!" John Minery said, with a touch of his old stage swagger. "You would not feel so comfortable if you had tramped fifty miles almost barefoot. Look at my boots. For hours and hours I kept my eyes on the distance and said, 'Shall I never see home at all?'"

"My good fellow," Atholstone said, "this is not a stage. There is no pasteboard scenery here, or glare of foot-lights. If this is your home, as you say it is, why of course the shelter of the roof is yours, but this is my room, and if you have anything to say to me you will find me a ready listener, but be quick, the night is advancing and I desire to be at rest."

"Mr. Atholstone," John Minery said, and then checked himself awkwardly—"well, you see, I know your name. I overheard a portion of a conversation you had to-night with a lady."

"Be plain, and say Miss Laura Felixtowe."

"That is her name," John Minery said, after another awkward pause. "I was seeking her when I heard voices. She seemed to be in great distress, and I have reason to believe that she was speaking of me. Am I right?"

"Some questions are easily asked and not so easily answered," Walter Atholstone replied.

"What do you really desire to know?"

"Whether you are her friend?"

"Yes."

"Her accepted lover?"

"No."

"Has she told you any part of her story?"

"Now we come to the cross-examination," said Walter Atholstone. "Yea or nay I would not satisfy your curiosity for every shilling I possess. If you want my advice I will give it you in a very few words—'Go back from whence you came and don't disgrace yourself by facing the woman you have injured so much already. You see by that I have narrowly escaped answering your question, and the cat is already half out of the bag.'"

"You have said enough," John Minery replied, in a sullen tone of voice. "Well, perhaps I have not been a pink of perfection, and yet not nearly so bad as some people have made me out to be. Don't tell the old people that I have been here. I only wanted to know that they were alive and well, and to look at the place."

He lingered in the doorway, and Walter Atholstone approached and touched him on the shoulder.

"Man," he said, "I am a student of human nature, and I know what is passing in your mind."

"Well?"

"You are in want of money—I need not remind you of that unpleasant fact," Atholstone

said. "Come back, I may be able to satisfy your craving."

John Minery returned to the room, and having helped himself to another glass of wine rubbed his week-old beard and eyed Atholstone suspiciously.

"Miss Felixtowe and you were engaged years ago?"

"Quite right."

"And are so now?"

"I won't venture to say that," John Minery replied, brightening up. "We have had a little tiff, but I daresay it will end as most lovers' quarrels do."

"In marriage?"

"Yes, why not?" half defiantly. "Come, you are cross-questioning me now."

"Perhaps I have reason," Walter Atholstone said. "You asked me just now whether I was Miss Felixtowe's accepted lover, and I said no. You came down here to raise money. Don't deny it or get angry, for I want you to keep cool and listen carefully. Miss Felixtowe may give no thought of me, but I may be earnestly in love with her."

He watched Minery's face, half expecting an outburst of passion, but the seedy fellow only leaned forward and listened more intently.

"I am convinced at last," Atholstone thought, "the dog's only object is money to squander in drink and debauchery."

"What will you say if I make you an offer whereby you will leave this part of the country and promise not to return to it again within a year?" he said.

"That all depends on the offer," Minery replied.

"Name your own terms."

"I am sure I do not wish to stand in Laura's way," John Minery said, in a whining tone. "I am very fond of her, but I am sure many a man would make her happier. What would you say to five hundred pounds?"

"I should say, as I say now to your face, that you are a mean, contemptible villain," Walter Atholstone replied; "I should say, as I say now, that you are a disgrace to the mother who gave you life and love, and to the honourable man who has to own you as his son, to his sorrow. I have tested you, with the result I expected. Any man with a spark of principle in him would have thrown such an offer back in my teeth. This is my room, and I desire you to leave it without delay."

Their voices had grown louder by degrees, and Walter Atholstone recoiled a few paces as he heard footsteps on the stairs, and John Minery, the younger, stood white and motionless.

"Shut out the light," he cried, hoarsely; "it is my father!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE COTTAGE DESERTED.

THE farm-house was a scene of rejoicing. The good old people with true natural love welcomed back their son, clothed him, supplied him with money, and as Walter Atholstone gazed at him in his altered condition, could not help confessing that he was a handsome man.

John Minery, the younger, had the good sense to hold his tongue concerning the interview with Walter Atholstone, and the latter, for reasons of his own, kept silence.

"I have not told Laura that you have returned," said the old man to his son. "My lad, I'll warrant she'll be glad enough to see you, although I must say you have neglected her somewhat badly. You shall stay here with me and we will work up the farm again, for I am sure you have had enough of roaming about to last you a lifetime."

"Yes," the son replied; "but one thing must be done before I see Laura Felixtowe."

"And what is that?"

"That fellow Atholstone must be got out of the house as quickly as possible," John Minery, the younger, replied. "I have reason to believe that he is a prying, meddling fool, and I should never feel comfortable while he is about. I have

come here to lead a new life and make amends for the past, and I don't think there is anything very unreasonable in my request."

Meanwhile Walter Atholstone, who had passed a very bad night and was paler than usual, was on his way to the pretty cottage sheltering Laura Felixtowe.

"She must hear the news of this fellow's arrival soon," he murmured, "and it may as well come from my lips. Hallo! What is the matter? the blinds are all down, and it looks like a house of mourning."

A servant, bearing a letter in her hand, met him in the doorway.

"You are to read this, sir, please, before you ask any questions," she said. "Miss Laura told me that the letter would explain everything."

Walter Atholstone tore open the envelope with trembling fingers.

"My aunt and I have decided to live in London, and to dispose of the land, cottage and furniture. You will hear of me by applying to Messrs. Wyatt and Woods, solicitors, New Inn, London."

Atholstone stared from the letter to the servant in blank dismay.

"Do you know anything of this?" he asked.

"Were you in your young mistress's confidence?"

"Partly, sir," the girl replied. "Miss Laura was frightened last night by the appearance of some man, and she and her aunt left for London by the early train this morning."

"Very well," Atholstone said, quietly, and turning sharply on his heel found himself confronted by John Minery, the younger.

"I have altered my mind: I did not think of seeking an interview with Miss Laura Felixtowe," Minery said, as his face darkened with anger; "but seeing you passing down the lanes I followed you. What right have you to interest yourself about my affairs?"

"By a right that comes from Heaven," Walter Atholstone replied. "You liar, you were here last night! Leave this place; you have no longer a right here."

"And pray why not?" John Minery demanded. "Because Miss Felixtowe and her aunt have given it up. They have left it to get rid of you!"

"And whose place is it now?"

"It will be mine within four-and-twenty hours," Walter Atholstone replied. "The price I intend paying for it is the exact sum of which you have cheated the simple-hearted girl who threw her pure love away on a worthless wretch. Now we understand each other. Out of my path or I will make you acquainted with the weight of my walking-cane."

Brought to bay at last, John Minery, pale and trembling, endeavoured to speak, but no word passed his white lips, and suddenly swinging himself round he walked unsteadily through the open gateway.

In six hours Walter Atholstone sat in the private office of Messrs. Wyatt and Woods.

"You have made us a handsome offer, Mr. Atholstone," said the senior partner, "and we should have jumped at it from an utter stranger, but we think it best to consult Miss Felixtowe on the subject."

"Can I see her here?"

"Yes, in less than an hour," Mr. Wyatt said, touching a bell. "I will despatch a messenger at once."

Atholstone left the office in search of refreshment he so much needed, and on returning found that Laura Felixtowe had arrived.

She was alone, and as Walter Atholstone took her hand he felt it tremble.

The solicitors, under some pretence, left the room, and it was fully a minute before either of the young people spoke.

"I daresay your solicitors have told you the nature of my visit," Atholstone said at last.

"Yes," Laura replied, "and I could not wish for the dear old place to fall into better hands. Will you live there, Mr. Atholstone?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"It will be a very lonely place for one so

fond of roaming about as you are," Laura said, casting her eyes down on the floor.

"Not so lonely, I hope," Atholstone returned. "Come back to your old home," he continued, after a momentary pause. "Banish the past as a bad dream, and live in the brighter future. Be my wife, Laura, for I have learned to love you very dearly."

There was a long silence after these words, but when the solicitors entered the room they were surprised to hear that there was some more work for them in the form of a marriage settlement.

Before the instructions could be properly taken Mr. Sowberry Myers hustled into the office and hustled out as soon as he caught sight of Atholstone, but returned at the sound of his voice.

"You see I am doing something better than spoiling paint and canvas now," Atholstone said, good-humouredly. "Give me your hand and allow me to introduce you to my betrothed."

"I know I have been an old fool," Mr. Myers said, wiping his eyes with a huge silk handkerchief. "But there, I can bear it like a man—like a true gentleman farmer. Bless you, my children. I am glad in my heart that that loafing scoundrel Minery—I pity his father—has met his match at last."

There was a pleasant little dinner party that evening in a little house on Brixton-rise. Aunt Jane fainted dead away when she heard all the particulars, but recovered, and insisted on saluting Walter Atholstone with her chaste lips.

Mr. Myers was one of the party, and came out nobly.

"All this must be kept a secret," he said. "It will be a surprise and give the people of Barlygreen something to talk about for many a day. Glorious!—glorious! And now suppose we have a rubber of whist. Nothing else will compose my ruffled feelings."

Mary, the good, faithful servant, was surprised at receiving a telegram from Walter Atholstone, charging her not to leave the cottage, as her mistress had decided to travel on the Continent for some time.

The people of Barlygreen began to wonder, surmise, and shake their heads, after the approved manner of village gossips.

They were at a loss what to think of their favourite's disappearance, for Laura had been ever kind, and there was not a man, woman or child in the village who would have murmured at walking fifty miles to do her a service.

John Minery, the younger, kept his lips closed and was shunned by the people who had known him from his boyhood.

They were sure that he was at the bottom of all the mischief; but not a word said he, and so the months sped on, and left them wrapped in mystery.

The trees were gold and red with the tints of autumn when one sunny afternoon a carriage with blinds drawn dashed through Barlygreen and stopped at the cottage.

Three people alighted from it—Walter Atholstone, Laura, and Aunt Jane. The news sped like wildfire, and it was not long in reaching the Minerys' farm.

The summer had brought changes.

Mrs. Minery rested in the quiet churchyard, and the old farmer, weary and broken-hearted, had determined to give up the land to his son and retire to a small cottage.

Maria had married a strapping young gamekeeper, and another red-faced girl was in her place.

When John Minery, the younger, heard the news he said nothing.

He was still in the dark as to the real state of things, and smiled as he heard the people talking joyfully of Laura Felixtowe's return.

But mischief was at work in his heart, and long after his father had retired he wandered about the house.

"I will see her to-morrow, at all risks," he said, as he ground his teeth and clenched his hands. "I am in a corner again. My father does not know that he is a pauper, through me. When he knows that his little savings are gone he will curse me and die."

Daylight found him wandering about the cottage he knew so well.

Laura was often in the garden early, tending the flowers, and she came now—but not alone. Her husband, Walter Atholstone, was with her, and his quick eyes detected John Minery, and moving forward swiftly he planted himself before him.

"I warn you off these premises!" he said. "How dare you to come here to insult my wife with your presence?"

"Your wife!" Minery gasped, starting as if he had been stung. "Your wife?"

"Yes," said Walter Atholstone, "and I have something to return you—a trifle in the shape of a locket."

John Minery turned slowly away, but he did not return to the farm.

Night came, and he was still absent, and his old father sat listening to the pattering of the rain and moaning of the wind—listening in vain for the footsteps of his son.

Presently the door opened and a neighbour entered.

"Minery," he said, "there has been a slight accident down at the mill-pool. Your son—"

"God have mercy on me!" the old farmer cried, and covered his face with his hands.

"Jackson, the miller, found him," the man continued, speaking slowly and gently, "and he is still in the mill. Will you come?"

"Yes. But to look at his lifeless body. Don't tell me a lie; he is dead."

"It can't be denied, Minery." And the bearer of the evil tidings caught the former as he fell swooning, and placed him on the sofa.

Years have passed away and Barlygreen is bright and beautiful again with summer weather. Love reigns in the cottage, and from the road you can hear the happy voices of children—rosy, sun-browned ones, who look part of the lovely season, and within the shade of yonder cedar sit the parents of the noisy children. An old man moves about the garden among the roses—that is John Minery; in the porch a hale old lady is reading—that is Aunt Jane; and the others—surely the reader can supply the names.

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

Pews.—The first seats provided in churches are seen in some Anglo-Saxon and Norman edifices still standing in England. They consist of stone benches which project from the wall around the whole interior, excepting on the east end. In 1319 the congregation are represented as sitting on the ground, or standing, and it was at this period that the people introduced low, rude, three-legged stools promiscuously over the church. Not until after the Norman Conquest were wooden seats brought into use. In 1287 a decree was issued in regard to the wrangling for seats—which had become a decided nuisance—that no one should call any seat in church his own, except noblemen and patrons, each person taking the nearest empty seat in church he could find as he entered the church. From 1530 to 1540, as we approached nearer the Reformation, seats were more generally appropriated, their entrance being guarded by cross-bars and the initial letter of their owners engraved upon them. But directly after the Reformation the pew system commenced, for there is a complaint from the poor commons addressed to Henry VIII., in 1546, referring to his decree that a Bible should be in every church at liberty for all to read, because they feared it might be taken into the "quyre," or some "pue." Galleries in churches were not known till 1608. As early as 1611 luxurious arrangements were considered essential in church pews, and they were baized or cushioned all over their sides, and the seats furnished with comfortable cushions, while

footstools were also introduced. Next the sides of the pews were made so high that they entirely concealed the occupants from view. This is said to have been a device of those who desired not to be seen by the officers who reported all who did not bow when the name of Jesus was spoken by the clergyman. Fireplaces were also built in the pews and every possible convenience added for the comfort of the highly-favoured few. But the services were often so long and tedious that the listeners fell asleep and frequently nodded their approbation of the minister's sermon, while they were totally oblivious of its teachings. Swift's lines allude to the prevailing fashion of church furniture:

"A bedstead of the antique mode,
Compact of timber many a load,
Such as our ancestors did use,
Was metamorphosed into pews,
Which still their ancient nature keep,
By lodging folks disposed to sleep."

With the reign of Charles I. the reasons for heightening the sides of the pews disappeared, and from the civil wars they declined to their present height.

THE "BLUE BLANKET."—According to Pennicuk the order of the Blue Blanket was instituted by Pope Urban II., in the twelfth century, and is therefore more ancient than any order of knighthood in Europe. This author tells us that a large number of Scottish mechanics who followed Allan, Lord High Steward of Scotland, and aided him in the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels, took with them a banner bearing the inscription, "In bona voluntate tua edificaverunt muri Jerusalem." This banner, which they styled the "Banner of the Holy Ghost," was, from its colour, familiarly known as the Blue Blanket. On their return they dedicated it at the altar of Saint Eloi, in St. Giles's Church—St. Eloi being the patron saint of the hammermen of Edinburgh, the guardians of this celebrated banner. Further, Pennicuk tells us that in acknowledgment of a royal service rendered to him King James III. confirmed the craftsmen in all the privileges of the Blue Blanket, which they obtained by permission as an immemorial possession, and he ordered it to be called in all times coming, "The Standard of the Crafts within the Burgh." At its appearance not only they but all the artisans within Scotland are bound to follow it and fight under the Convener of Edinburgh. In all cases of civil commotion, "up went the Blue Blanket."

A CARPENTER'S CLOCK.—The clock on the church-steeple of the village of Lonforgan had long been stopped, sums of money had been more than once raised to repair the old machinery, but all efforts to set it going proved unsuccessful. This state of affairs weighed heavily on the mind of a carpenter in the village, who tried his hand at the clock and found the machinery in a very dilapidated state. However, he devoted his leisure hours to studying the principles of clock-making, and at last, thinking that he saw his way to making a new clock, boldly commenced the work. He not only made most of the models for the different wheels, but even several of the tools for adjusting perfectly the respective parts when moulded. He could only employ himself on the clock during spare hours, but at last he finished the clock, and with his own hands placed it in the steeple, where it keeps time with admirable accuracy.

CONVEYANCE OF A RANSOM.—The ransom of David Bruce was paid by instalments during several years towards the close of the reign of Edward III. The instalments, usually 4,000 or 6,000 marks, were paid to the sheriff of Northumberland, who was to deliver it to the sheriff of Yorkshire, at the city of York. In the forty-eighth year of Edward III. the sheriff of Northumberland received 4,000 marks at Berwick, which he conveyed to York, going himself with it, and having a guard of seventeen men-at-arms and nineteen archers. He set out on June 23 or 24, and did not reach York until the 4th of July. Percy Hay, then sheriff of Yorkshire, received it and sent it forward to London, under the charge of six esquires and eighteen mounted bowmen. They were ten days going and return-

ing. This appears to have been in those days rapid travelling.

CURIOUS SUPERSTITIONS.—In the little church of St. Hilary, in the island of Anglesea, the central panel of the oak altar support has long been lost, so long that a curious superstition has grown up respecting the opening it has left. The panel is small, hardly a foot wide, and the altar is small too, not more than sixteen inches wide. The belief is that any person who can get in beneath the altar by this open panel will not die for a year. The under side of the altar-board is thoroughly polished by the heads and shoulders of those who still frequently endeavour to struggle in and out, thus to ascertain their fate. In the same church is a curious piece of furniture—a pair of pincers like lazy-tongs, which has been in existence for more than a century and a half; its use is to catch intruding dogs by the leg.

YORK MINSTER.—It is somewhat remarkable that this ancient and famous church should retain the name of a "minster," or monastery, when it was never, in fact, occupied by monks at any period of its history. It was originally founded by Edwin, Saxon King of Northumbria, about the year 627, at the request of Paulinus, the Christian missionary, who had baptised him. The Saxon church was rebuilt in 767, by Archbishop Albert, and the first Norman Archbishop, Thomas of Bayeux, erected a new one towards the end of the eleventh century. There are still a few remains of those early ones in the crypt. The existing cathedral is of Early English architecture in the north and south transepts, Decorated Gothic in the nave and in the Chapterhouse, Early Perpendicular in the Lady Chapel and Presbytery. The old timber roof of the choir and nave were destroyed by two singular disasters—the first time, in 1829, by the act of an incendiary madman, Jonathan Martin, who was found guilty of setting the woodwork on fire and was sent to a lunatic asylum; and the second time by an accidental fire in 1840. The great central tower is the largest in England, being 65 feet square. The west front itself is the most perfect architectural composition of its kind in this country.

ANCIENT CITY MANSIONS.—The two mighty and illustrious northern families of Percy and Nevill had both of them town mansions in Aldersgate Street, on the western side—Northumberland House, on the site of Bull-and-Mouth Street and Mount Street, and Westmoreland House, on the site of Westmoreland Court, extending to Bartholomew Close. On the death of Henry, first Earl of Northumberland, at the battle of Brainham Moor, 1408, and his subsequent attainder, King Henry IV. gave Northumberland House to Queen Joan for a wardrobe. Afterwards it became a printing office, then a tavern, and finally was divided into shops and tenements. Lauderdale House stood on the east side, a little north of Shaftsbury House. It was the house of the Earl of Lauderdale, a member of the "Cabul" Ministry of Charles II. Upon the site was built Bote and Walshe's distillery. Close by Shaftsbury House stood Bacon House, the residence of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper to Queen Elizabeth and father of Lord Chancellor Bacon, one of the greatest of our philosophers. Ralph Montague, third Baron and first Duke of Montague, "as arrant a knave as any in his time," as Swift observed when he was raised to a dukedom, lived in Aldersgate Street until he built Montague House, Bloomsbury (the British Museum), and removed thither.

AN OLD INN YARD THEATRE.—The stage was enclosed by curtains, tent-fashion, which hung from above and included a bit of the inn gallery for the uses of the drama. The platform was strewn with rushes. Musicians were placed in the gallery outside the curtain. One sound of the trumpet called the public in, and they stood on the rough stones in the dry—the original "pit," unless they engaged rooms that opened upon the surrounding gallery, in which they might enjoy themselves and look out on the actors. These rooms were the first private boxes, and when buildings were erected for the acting of plays their private boxes were called "rooms." The inn gallery has developed

into the "dress circle" of modern times. The second flourish of trumpets invited the spectators to settle themselves in their places. After the third sound of the trumpet the curtain was drawn, and the actors began to represent in action the story made for them into a play. There was no scenery. The bit of inn gallery included between the curtains might be a balcony for a Juliet, a town-hall or tower to be defended, a palace-roof or any raised place that was required by the action. The writer and actors were the whole play. They alone must present everything by their powers to the imaginations of those upon whom they exercised their art. At Court, for the Queen's pleasure, there was still only the scaffold on which to present the story, and, beyond the dressing of the actors, only the most indispensable bits of stage appointments as a seat, if the story required that one should sit, or a table, if necessary. But if the poet wanted scene painting he must paint his own scene in his verse. It is evident, also, from contemporary satires that the actors did not stint sound and fury when the play allowed it. But although the greater part of the audience was uneducated there were present, also, courtiers, scholars and poets, who were exacting in their notions of wit. The writers were young University men with a credit for wit at stake, and while the play in the inn yard could not satisfy the crowd that paid to see them, unless they told good stories vigorously and sent their scenes home to the common sympathies of men, the poets who wrote them were compelled to keep in mind the taste of the polite world, by whose judgment socially they must needs stand or fall. Plays written, not for the inn yard but for the Court, might appeal only to appetite for wit, and neglecting the deeper passions of life, play fancifully with a classical fable or work out ingeniously, through mythological details, some subtle under-thought or delicate piece of compliment to the Queen.

ON MARRIAGE.

MEN and women, says Theodore Parker, and especially young people, do not know that it takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving and well-sorted; but nature allows no sudden change. We slope very gradually from the cradle to the summit of life. Marriage is gradual—a fraction of us at a time. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. I know young people think love belongs only to brown hair and plump, round, crimson cheeks. So it does for its beginning, but the golden marriage is a part of love which the bridal knows nothing of. Youth is the tasselled and silken flower of love; age is the full corn, ripe and solid in the ear. Beautiful is the morning of love, with its prophetic crimson, violet, purple and gold, with its hopes of days that are to come. Beautiful also is the evening of love, with its glad remembrances, and its rainbow side turned toward heaven as well as earth. Young people marry their opposites in temperament and general character, and such marriages are generally good ones. They do it instinctively. The young man does not say, "My black eyes require to be wed with blue, and my over-vehemence requires to be modified with somewhat of dulness and reserve." When these opposites come together to be wed they do not know it, but each thinks the other just like himself.

Old people never marry their opposites, they marry their similars and from calculation. Each of these two arrangements is very proper. In their long journey these opposites will fall out by the way a great many times and charm each other back again, and by and bye they will be agreed as to the place they will go to and both become reconciled. The man will become nobler and larger for being associated with humanity so much unlike himself, and she will be a noble woman for having manhood beside her that seeks to correct her deficiencies and supply her with what she lacks, if the diversity be not too great and if there be a real generosity and love in

their hearts to begin with. The old bridegroom, having a much shorter journey to make, must associate himself with one like himself.

A perfect and complete marriage is perhaps as rare as perfect personal beauty. Men and women are married fractionally—now a small fraction, then a large one. Very few are married totally, and they only, I think, after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment. Such a large and sweet fruit is complete marriage that it needs a very long summer to ripen in, and then a long winter to mellow and season; but a real happy marriage of love and judgment between a noble man and woman is one of the things so very handsome that if the sun were, as the Greek poet fabled—a god—he might stop the world in order to feast his eyes with such a spectacle.

HOW JAPANESE FANS ARE MADE.

A BRITISH consul in Japan gives the following particulars touching the manufacture of folding fans at Osaka:—As in many other branches of industry the principle of division of labour is carried out in the fan-making trade. The bamboo ribs are made in Osaka and Kyoto by private individuals in their own houses, and combinations of the various notches cut in the lower part are left to one of the finishing workmen, who forms the various patterns of the handle according to plans prepared by the designer. In like manner the designer gives out to the engravers the various styles which his experience teaches him will be most likely to be salable; and when the different blocks have been cut it rests with him to say what colours are to be used for the two sides of the fan. This official holds the most important position on the staff in ordinary. When the printed sheets which are to form the two sides of the fans have been handed over to the workman, together with the bamboo slips which are to form the ribs, he folds the two sheets of which the fan is to be composed, so they will retain the crease, and this is done by placing them between two pieces of paper, well saturated with oil and properly creased. The four are then folded together and placed under a heavy weight.

When sufficient time has elapsed the sheets are taken out and the moulds used again, the released sheets being packed up for twenty-four hours in the folds. The next process is to take the ribs, which are on a wire, and set them in their places on one of the sheets after it has been spread out on a block and pasted. A dish of paste then gives the woodwork adhesive powers, and that part of the process is finished by affixing the remaining sheet of paper. By the time the fan is put up to dry it has had more handling than any foreign paper could stand; foreign paper was tried and had to be given up as not fit for the work, but with great care the Osaka fanmakers have been able to make some fans with the printed pictures which have been sent over from America, though they were invariably obliged to use one face of Japanese paper. Instead of first pasting the two faces of the fan together and then running in pointed ribs, the ribs are square, and are pasted in their places in the manner described above. The lacquered pieces and fancy work are all done in Kyoto and Osaka, and some of the designs in lacquer on bone are really artistic, but the demand for the ornamented fans is not sufficient to encourage the production of large quantities of first class work. When the insides are dry the riveting of the pieces together, including the outer covering, is rapidly done and a dash of varnish finishes the fan.

A TOILET observed by one of the correspondents of the "Parisian" at a fashionable watering-place: Costume of Indian foulard niello, old gold, coral and silver; the skirt has six plissés of foulard, and terminates in a flood of old valenciennes; the corsage is disposed with

double panier, the first draped on the hips and the second, much longer, trimmed with old valenciennes like the skirt; the sleeves, half length, are terminated by a drapery and valenciennes lace; over the corsege is draped a fichu trimmed with valenciennes, looped at the side in a bow with a bouquet of bears-ears and primroses.

FACETIÆ.

"PLETHORA."

COACH: "Dear, dear! How came you to fail in your 'Exam.'? I thought I had crammed you sufficiently."

"PLUCKED": "Ah—fact is—you crammed me so tight that I couldn't get it out!"

Punch.

A CRITERION INDEED!

BROWN: "Hampstead salubrious? I believe you, my boy. Why, I came here three months ago a perfect wreck from dyspepsia, and now I'm blessed if I can't eat the whole of a three-and-sixpenny lobster for supper, and wake up next day without thinking unkind things of anyone, not even my wife's relations!"

Punch.

THE STOPPER TO IRELAND'S IMPROVEMENT.—Cork.

Punch.

SPORT IN ALL SEASONS.—Amongst the Amendments to the Wild Birds Protection Act lately passed by Parliament, there is not one that can be expected to have the slightest effect in preventing a wild goose chase.

Punch.

MUSICAL INFORMATION.—The bag-pipe is no relation of the ancient sackbutt.

Punch.

FRED: "This egg is terribly hard, Biddy. It might have been boiling for an hour or two."

BIDDY: "An hour or two, Mister Fred! It's been boiling since yesterday, but it's the taste of an egg it is. No end of boiling will make the blaggard clane!"

Moonshine.

A NEW WRIT.—The Revised Testament.

Moonshine.

MR. BEADLAUGH'S PRAYER.—Keep me from the Fowler.

Moonshine.

AN ENTOMOLOGICAL MAMMAL.—A bug-bear.

Moonshine.

CAN A DEAR-HOUND BE "PICKED UP" cheap, and can you buy a guinea-pig for two shillings?

Moonshine.

THE SUMMER IS TO LAST TILL OCTOBER.

(See "The Comet," &c.)

SPINSTER AUNT (who gushes and monopolises): "So warm, Mr. Frank. October, and eighty in the shade, they say. What is the freezing point, then?"

SPINSTER NIECE: "Thirty-two is the usual thing, auntie; but sometimes it goes on to forty and over!"

Moonshine.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE.—Just now sportsmen are gone for their holiday, and when they come home late they have, in many instances, got a bag. City clerks go for their holidays later on; in many instances when they return late they get the "sack."

Moonshine.

WHAT THE JEWS IS THIS.

If you'd aim, oh, at jeux de mots,
When you've of Jews made diagnoses;
And you'd 'em owe, this you'd deem oh—
That you'd a Jew de Mo' in Moses!

Moonshine.

IRISH LOGIC. (A FACT.)

(Irish groom in charge of trap, asleep; rug and whip stolen.)

MASTER: "Halloo, Mick! you are asleep."

GROOM: "No, sur, I am not."

MASTER: "You have been; both rug and whip are gone. The fact of the matter is, you and I part to-morrow."

GROOM: "All right, sur; will oi give you a month's notice, or ye me?"

Judy.

PRECISELY.

WHY is the conductor of an orchestra likely to live ever so much longer than other people?—Why, because, you know, he can beat Time. Aha!

Judy.

AN ILLEGAL CONVEYANCE (WITH TOO MANY RIDERS).—The river steamboat.

Judy.

MINT SAUCE FOR LAMB.

(After Goldsmith.)

WHEN man, less faithful than the colley,
Deserts his love and goes astray,
What art can make the maiden jolly?
What charm can drive her grief away?

The way her grief to overcome is,
Instead of lying down to die,
To claim three thou. for breach of promise,
And show her swain the reason why."

Judy.

How hard to bear is any suspense, from whatever cause it may arise! Can there really be, however, any species of suspense so hard to bear as that of—hanging?

Judy.

Most of us have heard of alligators' tears; how many of us, though, have ever seen whales' blubber?

Judy.

CURIOUS OLD CON.

SUPPOSING the wife of your bosom were to be suddenly taken ill and faint right away, why would she then be like a ship with a man overboard?—Why, because, you see, she ought to be brought to.

Judy.

WHAT'S "THAT"?

MEMBER OF SCHOOL BOARD (to pupil): "What part of speech is the word 'that'?"

PUPIL: "I think that that depends on circumstances."

M. S. B.: "Then you find that that 'that' is used in different senses?"

P.: "Yes: that 'that' that that refers to has various meanings."

M. S. B.: "Do you think that that 'that' that that refers to is used too frequently?"

P.: "I think that that 'that' that that 'that' refers to is necessarily used frequently in some cases."

M. S. B.: "But do not you think that that 'that' that that that that 'that' refers to might be differently treated?"

P. (exasperated): "Sir! I think that—that that 'that' that that that that 'that' that that refers to might—"

M. S. B.: "Thank you! That will do."

Judy.

A TRYING MOMENT.—When your wife's new bonnet comes home.

Judy.

A BRIEF DIG-SESSION.

If you wish to be really happy at the seaside buy a wooden spade and carry it about concealed up your back. By its aid you can at any time enjoy your otium eum "dig."

Fun.

A BARE CHANCE.

In a case of baby-farming the other day the defendant's name was "Kidd," and the inspector who found her out was called "Babey"! Now, if one were a professional joker what revels one might have over the coincidence!

Fun.

THE NEAREST "WATERING PLACE"—The handiest drinking fountain.

Fun.

SAD ACCIDENT.

A PARTY of Londoners last week put out in a small boat from Hastings. In a short time it came on so rough that they were all of them very much "upset." Luckily, however, the boat itself wasn't.

Funny Folks.

DIS-COLOURATION.

THE duke must not be blamed because his latest order will keep regimental colours out of action. It is merely his way of notifying to the foe that British valour shows no signs of flagging.

Funny Folks.

JACK DOLMAR'S DECISION.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

A LONG procession filed up one of the narrow, steep streets of Siena and reached the broad, open space in front of the ugly old church of San Domenico.

It was a very gorgeous procession, with its martial music, its silken banners, and its picturesque, fourteenth-century costumes; and in gazing thereat one might have fancied oneself transported back into the heart of the Middle Ages.

But it only needed a glance at the surrounding crowd to dispel the illusion. Black hats and flounced gowns asserted the supremacy of the present era. There was nothing medieval, unless it might be the dust, which was thick enough and suffocating enough to have been the accumulated result of centuries.

Ernest Latimer stood on the church-steps and watched the procession and the throng as modern young men do regard such scenes, with a half-pitying, half-bored expression.

But when the foremost rank of the procession had gained the steps the crowd separated so suddenly, to let it pass, that Latimer was pushed close up into the face of an exceedingly pretty girl, and his right arm, which he had involuntarily extended to protect himself, was forced almost around her waist.

She looked at him indignantly, as was natural, and without paying the least attention to his hastily-uttered apologies retreated to the other side of her companion. This person, who was big enough and broad enough for a son of Anak, bent a scowling countenance upon our hero, who was about to scowl back, for the crowd had ruffled his temper, when suddenly the faces of both changed in expression.

"Hallo!" cried the son of Anak.

"Hallo, Jack?" responded Latimer.

Then they shook hands, and Jack said, with the composure and the ineluctance of our day:

"This is a rum go! Who'd have thought of your turning up here?"

"I should have sooner thought of that than of your doing so," retorted Latimer. Then he glanced at the lovely girl at Jack's side, who had been watching these proceedings with huge astonishment. "She must be Jack's sister," thought Latimer; and he added, quite enthusiastically, "I'm awfully glad to see you, Jack Dolmar!" And he shook hands again.

"Well," said Jack, heartily, "the sight of you is refreshing. Why, I was talking to Kate about you this very morning. Oh, I say, you don't know Kate, do you? Sis, this is Mr. Latimer."

The young lady looked at our hero with a grave smile as he lifted his hat; and Latimer, then and there, decided that she was the loveliest creature he had ever met. A certain mischief in her eyes, the result doubtless of the ludicrous way in which they had met, and which belied her somewhat stately mien, completed the charm, rendering her perfectly bewitching.

"Have you been travelling on the Continent long?" he asked.

"We left England last autumn and have spent the winter between Rome and Naples," replied Miss Dolmar.

"Rome is the biggest sell in the world, and Naples is a bigger," interposed her brother, with decision. "Oh, I say, Katy, have you had enough of this? The procession has got into the church—let's cut the concern."

"You see what a hopeless Goth he is, Mr. Latimer," said Miss Dolmar.

"Thank goodness, that's over," said Jack, with a sigh of relief, as they turned away.

"His invariable remark, in Rome, after we had visited a ruin, or picture-gallery," said Miss Dolmar. "You may fancy what a sympathetic creature Jack is to go sight-seeing with, Mr. Latimer."



[A LOVE TOKEN.]

"Give me nature," returned Jack. "Anybody else who likes may keep the faded old frescoes and the rubbishing piles of stones. And now aren't you both hungry? Let's have lunch."

Latimer laughed to himself; this was so much like an Englishman. "Always hungry, always ready to eat," he thought.

A few steps led them to the Lizza, the pretty promenade, which every patriotic Sienese believes the finest in the world. At the farther side some enterprising German had opened a beer-garden. Miss Dolmar declined anything, but Latimer, though not hungry, felt he must join Jack.

They sat there and talked, for a long while. They talked of Jack's visit to America, where he and Latimer had made acquaintance and become fast friends; of Latimer's own extensive travels; of Miss Dolmar's London seasons; of books, art, etc.

Then they walked about the promenade and at last Miss Dolmar proposed that they should go up to the fortress at the side and watch the sunset from the ramparts. As they reached the iron gates a young officer seated in the shadow of the wall started up and hurried forward with so many exaggerated Italian expressions of delight that Latimer felt sudden jealousy and wrath rise in his soul. Such a handsome young officer too, almost as tall as Latimer himself, and possessing the advantage of his showy Lancr's uniform to set off his fine figure.

But somehow Miss Dolmar's frank pleasure

at meeting him proved a sort of comfort to Ernest. If the Italian had been a favoured admirer, he reflected, she would have seemed less frankly glad. So his wrath died out, and he could even mentally admit that the young lieutenant was "a splendid-looking chap."

The officer merely gripped Jack's hand, too busy pouring out voluble greeting to Miss Dolmar in his native tongue to have any words to bestow on her brother, and the lady replied in very fair and fluent Italian, considering that she was an Englishwoman.

"Come, now, Luigi," cried Jack, "just stop your inos and issimos and talk English. What's the use of your understanding the finest language in the world if you won't speak it?"

"Because Miss Dolmar speaks Italian so much better than I do your iron-bound tongue," returned the lieutenant, though his excellent accent belied his words.

"No flattery allowed, young man," said Jack. "By the way, Della Bocca, let me make you and my American friend, Latimer, acquainted. As you are neither of you English you won't need to be stiff and solemn."

"I could not be with an American—I like their country too much," said the lieutenant, with a smile that quite lit up his dark face.

"But what are you doing here anyhow?" asked Jack. "None of your regiment quartered in Siena, is there?"

"No. But my mother lives here. I am on furlough. I'm a Sienese," he added.

"So you are—I forgot. Well, you can't help it," retorted Jack. "Since you haven't the bliss of being an Englishman, I suppose you might as well be Sienese as anything."

They all laughed, with the ease and heartiness with which people who like each other and are young can enjoy mutual badinage.

"We are going to watch the sunset, marquis," said Miss Dolmar, presently. "Will you come?"

"Unfortunate wretch that I am," he cried. "I've got to wait here for the colonel, who is busy in the barracks, but I'll join you after a little if you will permit."

"Then I'll wait with you," said Jack. "These two people will want to rave over the sunset, and I shall be glad to escape their rhapsodies."

Latimer wondered if he looked as delighted as he felt at this proposal on Jack's part. When he glanced at Della Bocca he knew that he must, for the young officer was watching him with a half-envious, half-angry light in his great eyes.

"I'm afraid we shall lose the finest of the sunset, Miss Dolmar, if we don't go," said Latimer.

"I am quite ready," she answered, with a smile, which made Latimer's heart leap and caused the lieutenant a sharp pang. But in an instant the situations were reversed, for Miss Dolmar gave the Italian a still sweeter smile, and said, in the most cordial tones of her beautiful voice:

"Please don't let Jack keep you here an hour—I've a thousand questions to ask."

"Indeed, indeed, I will not," he cried, flushing with pleasure, while his eyes shone like stars. "What a pleasure to have met you—I never dreamed of it—and you mean to stop some time?"

"A week, at least," said Miss Dolmar. "We are to wait for my aunt—she is in Naples."

Della Bocca clapped his hands in a boyish fashion which caused Latimer to smile disdainfully under his moustache; but he displayed a wisdom very few young men would have been capable of, for as soon as he and Miss Dolmar passed on he said:

"What a very handsome fellow—he looks clever too."

"He is," Miss Dolmar answered, "and the kindest, best-hearted man imaginable."

"Have you known him long?"

"Oh, yes. He is a connection of some relatives of ours. He has been several times in England, and has visited at our house."

"Ah," said Latimer, and set his teeth hard. Why should fate have bestowed such unmerited happiness on any member of the Latin race?

"See those soldiers—rather poor creatures, as a rule, these Italian warriors," he said, aloud.

"Why, you were praising them, awhile ago," exclaimed Miss Dolmar. "You told Jack to look at our troops of unfledged boys before abusing these."

"Did I? Oh, that was for the pleasure of taking Jack down a bit—he is such a thorough Briton," returned Latimer. Then he began to laugh, and added: "That's not the real reason though. I believe I was savage at the idea of Della Bocca's having known you a good while—being an old friend, when I'm just a new acquaintance."

"I could not consider you that," she said, seriously. "I do not forget your kindness to my brother. He would have died of that dreadful fever, in California, if it had not been for you. I have always wanted to thank you, Mr. Latimer. Let me do so now."

She spoke so gravely that Latimer felt ashamed and for a few moments they walked on, talking earnestly enough. They had a full half-hour's leisure to admire the beautiful view. In the foreground, Siena seated, like a queen, upon her throne of hills; beyond, for miles and miles, a sweep of woodland and plain, dotted with villas and towers; and the purple hills, in the distance, gorgeous in the evening light.

Then Dolmar and Della Bocca joined them and they all walked back to the hotel; and the Italian was asked to dine, an invitation he accepted, on condition that the three would go

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with him, later, to visit his mother. The promise was duly carried out, and the mother proved a most delightful old lady, frank and playful as a child, yet so stately and dignified withal, so beautiful in the picturesque ruin of age, that she seemed the fitting mistress of the great palace, strong and stern enough to have served as a fortress, yet so lighted up within by rare old frescoes, world-famed pictures, and cinque-cento treasures, that the most imaginative person could not have conceived a more charming abode.

The week which the brother and sister had proposed to spend in the quaint old town prolonged itself into a month. The aunt was detained, at Naples, by the illness of a favourite companion; and some other relatives, whom Jack especially detested, occupied Florence; and he declared that nothing should induce him to set foot there while they remained.

But the time did not seem long to any of them. Jack Dolmar was the best-tempered of mortals, as he was the laziest, except when hunting and shooting. This entire freedom from society duties, therefore, suited him exactly. To complete the sum of his indolent content, a pretty American widow, whom he had met in Rome, made her appearance at the hotel, and she and Jack plunged into a desperate flirtation. Neither believed the other really in earnest, and did not put much personal strength of feeling into the matter; though, with both, it was perhaps getting stronger than they knew.

As for Miss Dolmar, she never thought of danger—to herself or others.

The old marchesa had told her that Luigi was to marry a distant cousin in Genoa and so fulfil a long-settled arrangement between the families; and Jack had said that he believed Latimer was engaged to some American girl. In consequence, Miss Dolmar accepted the attentions of the pair as mere idle civilities.

But neither of the men was blind in regard to the other.

Each knew that he had a rival, and a dangerous one, too, from both physical advantages and mental gifts. But there was a strong liking between them in spite of this knowledge, a sympathy which neither could resist, try as he might; and both had reasons for trying, when jealous and morbid. Della Bocca was only twenty-five, and Latimer not quite a year older; and, experienced men of the world as they deemed themselves, there was a good deal of boyish impulse and vehemence still left in their natures.

Whenever they could not be with Miss Dolmar they were together, and they talked freely upon every possible subject except that lady. It might have been better and safer if in the beginning they had come to a distinct understanding on this point, and owned themselves rivals; but they did not, and it was very, very seldom that her name even found mention between them.

The weather was heavenly. The surrounding country afforded endless lovely drives and walks. The charming old town itself proved a never-ceasing object of interest. Just to wander about the streets was like plunging back into the Middle Ages.

But the enchanted month came to an end at last. The aunt was to arrive in a few days, and the pleasant little circle would be broken up. It was wonderful how both Latimer and Della Bocca, kept from an open revelation of feeling. But, impulsive as both were, each had motives for reticence sufficiently strong to enable him to preserve a reasonable degree of self-control. Latimer dared not speak after so short an acquaintance.

Katherine Dolmar was a very proud woman, he saw, and one quite capable of pronouncing his hasty avowal an impertinence. As for Luigi, he feared any discovery on his mother's part just now. No engagement between him and his cousin actually existed, but he knew what both families expected—knew, too, that Nina loved him. Nay! until the past winter had taught him the depth of his passion for Kate he had contemplated the prospect of marriage with pretty Nina with sufficient complacency. If his mother got any suspicion of the state of affairs,

she had quite determination enough to speak to Miss Dolmar in a way that would put an end to his hopes. So he felt that he must wait.

In a few months he was certain of being promoted to a captaincy. Also he should come into possession of an inheritance which would render him independent of his mother. Then, he trusted, between her pride in his advancement and her earnest love for him, to coax her into allowing him to have his own way.

The Dolmars gave a little dinner party one night; for, through the marchesa, they had made acquaintance with several Sienese families; had been invited to certain houses to pass the evening and drink orgeat and eat little biscuits. And so they decided to return the hospitalities in Anglo-Saxon fashion.

The Signora Della Bocca was to have matronised Miss Dolmar, but an inopportune neuralgic attack, a disease to which, like most of her elderly countrywomen, she was very subject, prevented her doing so. However, another stately dame with many long titles could do it just as well, in her threadbare velvet gown, decorated with a torrent of lace worth a small fortune.

It was lucky for the old marchesa's peace of mind that illness kept her at home, as Luigi was in a state of intense excitement, and the shrewd little lady would certainly have perceived something of his feelings towards the beautiful English girl.

The dinner proved very gay, chiefly through the efforts of Luigi and Latimer. When the ladies had all gone, with the exception of the widow, who sat bending over the table, where Jack was exhibiting some miracle of carving he had just purchased to Luigi and a young Frenchman, Miss Dolmar opened the window and stepped out into the balcony, and Latimer followed her.

"You have scarcely spoken to me all the evening," he said, laughing. "But, at least, I suppose you will bid me good night."

"And I have to thank you and the marchesa for making the evening a success," she replied. "You quite surpassed yourselves. You had rather the advantage, for you speak French better than he."

"I am thankful to get the advantage of him in any particular, however slight," Latimer remarked, with imprudent warmth.

She looked at him in a little surprise, though she laughed.

She was so lovely in her white robes, her face glorified by the moonlight, that he rather lost his head. Such wild words rose to his lips that it required a powerful effort to check them.

"You must not be kept up any longer," he said, afraid to remain there another instant. "Will you give me one flower—just one?" he added, pointing to a bouquet she held.

Had he known that Luigi had given it to her he probably would not have made the request.

She selected a spray of lilies-of-the-valley, and handed it to him, saying, laughingly:

"It is a shame to spoil the bunch, but you have been so good this evening that I must not refuse you."

"Thanks," he said. "I wonder if you can dream how precious it is to me."

He pressed the flowers to his lips as he spoke, gazing at her with eager, passionate eyes.

It was the first time he had ever spoken to her like that, the first time he had ever let his soul out in his gaze as he did then.

A sudden, quick tremor stirred Kate Dolmar's nerves. Almost simultaneously rose the recollection of what Jack had said about Latimer's engagement.

Words and look under this memory became an impertinence. But, ah! worse than that; in this quick moment of conflicting feeling she learned a secret that she had not even suspected—she cared for him!

She looked full in his face, however, proudly, sternly, with a glance which turned him cold from head to foot.

"I have hopelessly offended her," he said to himself.

"It is chilly here," she said, in an icy voice.

And passing him, with a slight inclination of the head, joined the group at the table.

For a few moments Latimer stood leaning against the edge of the balcony, actually sick and dizzy with apprehension and regret. What had he done—what had he done? Oh, he must speak now—she must hear; he must know his fate, however dreadful.

He started forward, not even remembering how mad he was to suppose that while so many were present he could have an opportunity of speaking privately to her.

When he reached the table Miss Dolmar and the widow had departed, and the two men were just bidding Jack good night.

Latimer took his leave also, hurried to his room, threw a paletot over his evening dress, caught up his hat, and went downstairs, turning into the *Lizza*, upon which the back windows of the hotel opened.

He came face to face as he reached the *Lizza* with Luigi and the Frenchman. An Italian who had been of the dinner party had also joined them.

"Here is Latimer too," said Luigi. "Come out to smoke, eh? We found Contarini loitering here. It does seem a shame to stop indoors such a perfect night."

Latimer was forced to put by his trouble, to stand there and talk, to behave as much like a sane man as he could manage. Contarini and the Frenchman got into some argument; Luigi seized Latimer's arm and pulled him forward, saying:

"Walk up to the fortress gates and back. Those fellows will have got to the end of their argument by that time."

He was laughing, jesting, in the wildest spirits. Somehow his light-heartedness roused a very fiend of wrath in Latimer's soul.

"What a noisy fellow you are!" he exclaimed. "I believe you Italians always stay boys."

Luigi stopped short and confronted him. They had reached an open space in the middle of the shrubberies. The moonlight fell full upon his face and it was angry and black.

As soon as the ungenerous words had left his lips Latimer felt heartily sorry for having uttered them. He began to stammer some words of apology.

Just then the light wind blew back the unbuttoned paletot thrown over Latimer's shoulders, and the marquis saw the lilies-of-the-valley in the lapel of his coat.

"Luigi, I—" he began.

But Latimer could get no further. The sight of the blossoms he had given Miss Dolmar roused Della Bocca's anger to a terrible pitch. He snatched the spray, flung it on the ground and set his heel on it, his face livid, his eyes blazing.

"You are not worthy to wear them," he hissed out. "You are not a gentleman!"

Latimer's fiery temper was roused.

"It would not be to one of your race that I would come to learn," he cried. Then his generous nature asserted itself even over his anger; he knew the fault was his. "Luigi, I didn't mean that," he exclaimed.

"Oh, that comes too late!" cried Della Bocca. "You can insult an Italian, sir, and then back out of the consequences."

"I'm not likely to try," said Latimer, divided between rage and remorse. "I think the insult came from you."

Luigi picked up the crushed flowers and held them out with a contemptuous laugh.

"If you had any more I'd treat them in the same fashion," said he.

Even at this instant Latimer had too much recollection of what was honourable to let Miss Dolmar have any connection whatever with their difficulty.

"If you want to quarrel you must choose another subject," said he.

"Ah! I understand. You are right," cried Luigi. "You have insulted my nation. Will you apologise?"

"Apologise!" Latimer laughed, derisively.

"You're a coward!" exclaimed Della Bocca, and Latimer caught the hand he had lifted just in time to avoid a blow.

The two men stood staring in each other's faces for an instant. It seemed to both that they had always hated one another.

"This can't end here," said Latimer.

"No!" cried Luigi, wrenching his arm free. "This earth isn't wide enough for both of us."

Again he lifted his clenched hand. Latimer pushed him back. Their two friends coming up the path at this crisis hurried forward with eager inquiries and exclamations.

"Mr. Latimer has insulted my country," said Luigi. "Contarini, I must beg to put the matter in your hands. No doubt, Monsieur de Morney will act as Mr. Latimer's friend."

He walked away towards the fortress and Contarini followed. The Frenchman remained with Latimer, and found the American as obstinate and determined as Contarini did Luigi.

In a few moments the two men left their principals and held a brief consultation. They were helpless. Neither Latimer nor Luigi would hear reason.

Latimer went back to his room, Luigi to Contarini's house. When the intermediaries followed their principals everything had been arranged.

The two men were to fight with swords at day-break, in the grounds of Contarini's villa, a short distance outside of the city gates, and already famous for such encounters.

Late in the night Jack Dolmar was awakened by a violent toothache, and he was so unaccustomed to pain of any sort that he bore it with even less than the small amount of fortitude which we men can summon against physical suffering.

He lighted a candle and dressed himself, fortunately remembering that Latimer had a bottle of chloroform in his room. So he started, candle in hand, down the corridor, hoping that he might succeed in getting what he wanted without waking his friend.

Softly opening the door he entered. The curtains were drawn about the bed. Latimer neither spoke nor stirred. Jack walked on tip-toe to the table, but the chloroform was not there.

He stumbled against a chair and made such a noise that he expected to see Latimer start up in astonishment and anger, but there was no sign of his having been disturbed.

"Talk about the Seven Sleepers," muttered Jack, rather indignant now that anybody could slumber so profoundly when he was suffering.

He went up to the bed. It was empty. It had not been occupied that night. Jack thought this very odd, but a fresh paroxysm made him forget everything but the necessity of finding the chloroform.

He discovered it at length behind some bottles on the bureau, filled his mouth, and as soon as the anæsthetic dulled the pain, began searching for a bit of cotton.

He recollected that Latimer had bought some the day before to wrap up some bits of ivory carving. He pulled out the table-drawer and the first thing he saw was a letter directed to himself lying on the top of the piles of papers.

He tore open the envelope. As he unfolded the sheet a second envelope, bearing his sister's name, fell from it. Jack glanced down the page and uttered a cry of dismay and grief. The letter was to tell him what to do in case the duel ended fatally for Latimer.

Horror-stricken as he was Jack needed very few moments to get back his strong, practical common-sense, and in the shock to lose his toothache.

He felt certain that jealousy in regard to his sister had been the real cause of the quarrel; he had known that both men were in love with her, and he reproached himself now bitterly for having held his peace.

He ought to have warned her, have warned Luigi also; for when Latimer assured him that he was mistaken about his ever having been engaged, Jack had learned his friend's secret, but

he had not chosen to meddle. Latimer, he said, must tell Kate himself.

The duel must not and should not take place. Why, Kate loved Latimer, he was sure of that. The widow, indeed, had insisted it was Luigi she liked, and angered Jack by declaring her a flirt.

But Kate was no flirt. He would prevent the encounter if he had to stand between the combatants.

But he was wasting time. He must go at once. The mention of Contarini's name made Jack certain of the place where they were to meet.

Jack ran back to his chamber, got his hat, and hurried downstairs. The porter, who slept in a little room off the entrance-hall, looked out as Jack passed.

"You are going out, too, signore?" he asked.

"Yes. How long since Mr. Latimer went?"

"Only a short time," replied the man, supposing from Jack's words that the command of secrecy laid upon him could not be meant to apply to the gentleman.

"Well, hold your tongue," said Jack, and tossed him a Napoleon.

The porter added it to the one he had lately received from Mr. Latimer, and retired to his couch to rest in peace. He knew very well what errand must be taking the two signori abroad at that hour, but it was none of his business.

The dawn was beginning to break as Jack hurried along the street leading to the Porta Romana, about a mile beyond which stood the Contarini villa. He passed a stable where he was in the habit of hiring horses. The door stood ajar; one of the men was there busy with a sick horse. Jack got him to saddle a fleet little beast he had often ridden, and away he dashed down the stony street.

It was growing broad daylight when he arrived at the villa grounds. Jack dismounted and tied his horse to a post. The gates were locked; but he remembered that further on there was an angle in the wall, which one could scale by means of some jutting stones. Contarini had once shown it to him when relating the means by which he used to get in and out at night in his boyish days.

Over the high wall went Jack, his gymnastic training rendering the feat easy enough. Once landed on the smooth turf below he raised up the principal avenue; and came out by the house. This was shut up at this season of the year.

He passed it and hurried on towards a wood at some distance. Beyond this was a cleared space. As Jack neared it he heard a voice call "Three!" Then came the clash of swords and on he bounded, reached the edge of the wood, and saw Latimer and Luigi just beginning their combat.

"Stop!" he shouted. "If either of you are going to fight it must be with me."

As he spoke he got close to them. The two seconds hurried up. Jack pushed them away.

"Latimer! Luigi!" he cried, absolutely forcing himself in between them.

Both turned, their uplifted weapons suspended in their hands. Jack's foot slipped; he stumbled forward, struck heavily against the point of Latimer's sword, reeled, and fell backwards upon the ground.

There was an instant of horrified silence, then a simultaneous groan broke from the bystanders. The surgeon knelt by the prostrate man, unbuttoning his waistcoat, tearing open his shirt and exposing a wound in the left breast, from which the blood flowed in a quick, irregular stream.

"My God, he is dead!" exclaimed Contarini.

The words roused Latimer from his stupor of agony. He snatched up his sword; but Luigi caught his arm just in time, otherwise in his despair he might have killed himself.

"He's not dead," cried the surgeon. "Give me that case of instruments, Contarini—quick!"

When the blood was staunched they carried Jack into the house; then came the most painful task of all—his sister must be sent for.

There are no words to describe the torture

which Latimer lived through during the next thirty-six hours of suspense. He believed afterwards that his reason would never have returned except for Luigi's care.

The young Italian's remorse equalled his own. Luigi had seen Katherine Dolmar, had taken the blame upon himself; his own suffering seemed nothing in comparison to Latimer's since an awful chance had made him the actual medium of Jack's misfortune.

It was Luigi who, at the expiration of those dreadful hours, brought Latimer the tidings that Jack had wakened out of the delirium which had followed the early hours of stupor. His first intelligible words had been to ask for his friend.

Luigi had to say farewell also. He had just been ordered to join his regiment without an instant's delay. The duel was supposed to be a profound secret, but all Siena knew of it, though the general belief was that it had taken place between the two foreigners.

The stern little old marchesa knew the truth, however, and Luigi's recall was her doing. She attended to that matter even before going out to the villa, to share Katherine Dolmar's watch.

Latimer obeyed the summons at once. He had only one hope, that he might not have to meet Katherine. He was shown up to the wounded man's room.

As he entered, Jack's white face turned slowly on the pillow, the honest blue eyes looked out at him with affectionate tenderness, one weakened hand stretched itself forward in welcome.

"Jack! oh, my God, Jack!" moaned Latimer, falling on his knees by the bedside, while the tears that were an honour to his manhood burst forth and choked his utterance.

The curtains stirred unnoticed by him, and Katherine Dolmar crept noiselessly out of the room.

"Come, come, old man, cheer up!" Jack said, in his kindest tones. "The doctor says I shall be all right in a fortnight. You've got to nurse me, you know. I recollect what a famous hand you are at it, and I give you fair warning, I don't mean to have anybody else."

So Latimer took his place by the bed and scarcely left it during the next ten days.

Katherine Dolmar shared his watch a great deal of the time, but he never once saw her alone, never had even an opportunity to know if she had forgiven him or ever might.

The day at last came when Jack could be dressed and sit up for a little and gladden them all by his gay spirits, which, by the way, somewhat horrified the aunt, who was of a severe turn of mind.

She had arrived soon after Jack's accident, but the share Latimer had borne therein was carefully concealed from her.

"Anybody would think you were the fellow just out of bed," exclaimed Jack, looking at his friend. And it was true; Latimer was pale and thin, as if from a long illness. "Now tell Kate she may come in," said Jack, when he was comfortably established in his easy chair.

Latimer opened the door, saw her walking up and down the corridor, and gave her brother's message to her. As the pair entered, Jack called:

"Come here, you two!"

They approached, and stood one on either side of his chair, both very pale, both with downcast eyes.

"Kate, give me your hand," continued Jack; and as she obeyed he added: "Give me yours, Latimer."

When he had both in his broad palms he joined them, and said, with a laugh which poorly hid a sob:

"I've a natural right to dispose of you as my sister, and I've bought the right to do what I please with you, Ernest, so I give you to each other. Now go away and talk it out."

So they were married early in the autumn, and Jack and the widow were married soon after. Luigi has not yet taken pretty Nina to wife, but he will before long, and will be happy enough after all.

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

It is only those that have done nothing who fancy they can do everything.

You cannot do two things well at once; you can't carry two melons under one arm.

THERE is no folly equal to that of throwing away friendship in a world where friendship is so rare.

WE hope to grow old, and yet we fear old age; that is, we are willing to live, and afraid to die.

BE always at leisure to do good; never make business an excuse for declining offices of humanity.

WHEN men fall, they love company; but when they rise, they love to stand alone, and see others prostrate.

WHEN one man has a little prejudice against another, suspicion is very busy in coining resemblances.

THE man who gives his children a habit of industry provides for them better than by giving them a stock of money.

WE are always striving for the things just out of our reach. The glittering pleasures in the distance look brighter and fairer than anything we possess. The friend who reaches out a hand and offers us his sympathy is put carelessly aside, while we are eager to win the friendship of those who have nothing to give us but coldness.

STATISTICS.

A PARLIAMENTARY return recently issued shows that the total number of British troops abroad on January 1, 1881, was 94,071, of whom 61,550 were English, 20,041 Irish, 7,704 Scotch, 1,128 born in India and the Colonies, 2,193 foreigners, and 1,445 not reported. The number sent on foreign service between January 1, 1875, and December 31, 1880, was: English, 69,840; Irish, 22,928; Scotch, 9,741.

A RETURN recently published shows that out of a total national income during the year ended on the 31st of March last, amounting to £72,722,206, the sum of £68,824,623 was raised by taxation; £2,235,436 was the result of services undertaken by the Crown, such as the postal and telegraph services, &c.; £272,142 arose from Crown rights (coinage and profits on bank issues), and £390,000 represented the rents of Crown lands. The expenditure, which was £693,363 less than the income, is also classified in the return.

THE unrevised statement of the second census of Canada shows that the population in the last decade has increased from 3,686,596, to 4,352,596, or 18.05 per cent. Each of the older provinces (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario) shows an increase ranging from 12.4 to 18 per cent., but it is in the new districts that the more rapid strides are apparent. Manitoba heads the list with 289 per cent., British Columbia follows with 78.64 per cent., while the North-west Territory has received an addition of 65.28 per cent. to its population of 1871.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HOW TO SELECT YOUNG FOWLS.

A YOUNG turkey has a smooth leg, and a soft bill, and if fresh, the eyes will be bright, and the feet moist. Old turkeys have scaly, stiff feet.

Young fowls have a tender skin, smooth legs, and the breast-bone yields readily to the pressure of the finger. The best are those that have yellow legs. The feet and legs of old fowls look as if they had seen hard service.

Young ducks feel tender under the wing, and

the web of the foot is transparent. The best are thick and hard on the breast.

Young geese have yellow bills, and the feet are yellow and supple. The skin may be easily broken by the head of a pin; the breast is plump, and the fat white. An old goose is unfit for the human stomach.

Fowls are most easily picked if scalded; but this renders the skin liable to be torn, and consequently they will not look nice.

It is said that very tough fresh meat may be made quite tender by soaking it in vinegar and water from six to twelve hours, according to the size of the piece. Three quarts of water and a little more than half a pint of vinegar will be enough for ten pounds, and that quantity of meat should soak seven hours.

BEANS AND BACON.—Choose young beans, boil them in water, with a goodly piece of bacon, a sprig or two of savory. When they are done put the piece of bacon on a dish, drain the beans, toss them for a minute in a saucepan, with plenty of minced parsley and some butter, and then put them around the bacon.

THINKING OF THEE.

Thinking of thee when the rosy dawn
Proclaims to the world a day new born;
Thinking of thee when nature's bloom
Sheds o'er the earth its rich perfume;
Oh! sweet are the hours, and dear is the spot,
Where I can dream and forget thee not.

Thinking of thee when the mid-day sun
Glints on the burdens of life begun;
Thinking of thee e'en labour is light,
For fields of Elysium are plain to my sight,
And sweet are the hours, and dear is the spot,
Where I can dream and forget thee not.

Thinking of thee when the twilight grey
Shuts from the crowds their glorious ray;
Thinking of thee 'neath the starry sky,
When swiftly, too swiftly, the hours pass by.
Then sweet are the hours, and dear is the spot,
Where I can dream and forget thee not.

Thinking of thee till the conqueror, Death,
Shall waft o'er my senses his frozen breath;
Thinking of thee, 'twill be hard to resign
The bright links of life ever woven with thine,
For sweet are the hours, and dear is the spot,
Where I can dream and forget thee not.

A. L. B.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NEGRO aged 110 has just been married in Georgia, and the papers are wishing him a long and happy life!

GERMAN beer brewed in the United States is rapidly taking the place in the East and West Indies of British beer formerly exported from this country.

THE number of young ladies receiving University degrees in France is increasing every year. With reference to teachers' certificates, out of 7,552 women who presented themselves, 5,022 received their certificates.

It has now been definitely fixed that her Royal Highness the Princess Louise will sail from Liverpool for Canada towards the end of October in the Allan steamship Parisian.

It is stated that the Melbourne Exhibition, now closed, has been a financial failure. The expenses connected with it amounted to £339,000, whilst the receipts were only £250,000.

THE harvest in the southern portion of Russia is reported to be more abundant this season than any on record. In certain districts the yields are stated to be quite 50 per cent. more than have been obtained in the best years of the present generation.

A TURTLE seized a Jamestown (N.Y.) young woman by the ear the other day as she was

bathing in Chautauque Lake, and the intervention of her friends alone saved her from drowning. The turtle's head had to be severed and its jaws prised apart before the young woman was set free.

A MARRIAGE with a deceased wife's sister lately took place at Nenchatel. The remarkable feature of the ceremony was that the officiating clergy included two ex-chairmen of the Congregational Union, the Rev. Dr. Stoughton and the Rev. J. C. Harrison. Mr. Colman, M.P., was also present.

A MAN with the patience of Job and the leisure time of an oyster has been counting the number of alterations in the Revised Version. It was said that about 5,000 changes had been made. Some said more and others less. Therefore he decided that they would count them all and settle the matter. He finds that no less than 36,000 changes have been made.

VIENNA printers will soon celebrate the 400th anniversary of Gutenberg's use of types. An illustrated book is to be published, on which all the resources of the craft will be lavished, treating of the history of the art from its infancy, and there will be an exhibition of all the mechanism of printing. All the leading cities of Europe are expected to be represented.

CENTENARIANS in the county of Stafford are rather scarce, but one exists in the parish of Coseley. At the annual call-over of the outdoor poor for the Coseley district, held at the Roseville schools, one of the applicants who applied personally for continuance of relief was an ancient female, Mary Meachem, who, in reply to the chairman, stated that she was in her 102nd year of her age and enjoyed good health.

Two gentlemen were fishing a few days ago in a lake at Llantrissant, when one hooked a pike weighing over two pounds. Before the fish could be landed it was swallowed, hook and all, by an enormous creature of its own species, and both were safely lapped. As soon as the big pike found himself out of the water he opened his capacious mouth with a gasp, and the smaller fish shot out of his gills a distance of several yards. The pike whose voracity thus hastened his untimely death weighed 18 lb.

It is said that the Polytechnic will shortly be sold, and that a different class of entertainment is likely to be the issue.

A STATUE of William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, has been unveiled at Folkestone, where he was born in 1578. The ceremony was performed by Professor Owen, C.B., who in the course of his address defended the practice of vivisection.

IN a New York prison a plan has been adopted of admitting the relatives or friends of culprits freely into their cells, undisturbed by the intrusion of any official. This confidence is not quite so great as it at first seems; for a microphone is adjusted to the wall of the cell, and adroitly covered with thin paper, pierced with small holes. By being connected with a telephone it enables a warder in an adjoining cell to listen to whatever conversation takes place; and it is claimed that the literal application of the saying "walls have ears" has resulted in the discovery of some important secrets.

A CURIOUS personage died recently at the age of 72—the Count Napoleon Bertrand, son of the companion of Napoleon I. at Saint Helena. The count was a very eccentric man, and every year he used to hire a room in an hotel, and go to bed for three months, after having given orders for food to be brought to him once a day and not a word to be spoken by the servant. He was asleep during the siege of Paris. One day the bread was so abominable that he flew into a rage and forced the waiter to tell him that the reason was that the city was besieged by the Prussians. The Count Bertrand was stupefied for a moment. At last he got up and wandered about the hotel for a time, saying to himself: "Paris besieged—besieged! What ought a Bertrand to do?" And after a few minutes' reflection he said: "I will go to bed." And he went to bed and slept out the siege. He was an assiduous attendant at the Bonapartist masses.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS are requested to observe that, although we never publish their names and addresses, we desire to be furnished with them in all cases, in addition to selected *nomina de plume*, otherwise communications may not receive attention. No charge is made for advertisements appearing on this page, and no responsibility is undertaken concerning them.

C. M.—The occasion of the keeping of Easter arose during the celebration of the Passover. This Jewish feast is kept at the full moon of the vernal equinox, whence the rule was made fixing Easter for the Sunday subsequent to the first full moon after the 21st of March, with the provision that, if the full moon happens on a Sunday, then Easter day shall fall a week later. This condition was introduced to avoid the observance of Easter at the same time as the Passover; but the coincidence will notwithstanding sometimes occur, and next will happen in the year 1903.

A. T. A.—In a warm room the impure air is rarified by the heat, and is consequently lighter than common air. It therefore ascends, and the lower stratum of air is the purest. But in a cool room, in a sleeping-room, for instance, the carbonic acid gas when first expelled from the lungs of a sleeper, being warmed, is lighter than common air and ascends, but as it cools it becomes double the weight of the ordinary air, and descending, it lies in its greatest density near to the floor. This makes it advisable to have the bed raised two feet or more from the floor.

B. C.—A ham may be cut in three ways. By beginning at the knuckle, which must be turned towards your left hand, and cut in a slanting direction; or at the thick end, which is then turned towards your left; or in the ordinary manner, like a leg of mutton, beginning in the centre. The slices must be as thin and delicate as you can possibly make them. One slice is given as an accompaniment to fowl or veal.

B. W.—Scientific men have not yet been able to agree as to the identity of our recent comet. Some think it is the comet of 1738 and 1807 which is supposed to have an orbit which it traverses once in seventy-four years, but that view is not generally concurred in. Astronomers in different localities are still studying the comet through their telescopes in the hope of getting at something positive in regard to it.

A. G.—A good gargle for sore throat is made as follows: Half a teaspoon of vinegar, half a teaspoon of water, half a teaspoon of salt, and half a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda. Mix and use frequently.

B. M.—1. Castor oil and brandy will promote the growth of the hair. For the whiskers and moustache glycerine may be substituted. 2. Glycerine and lemon juice will whiten and soften the hands.

L. M. G.—Nothing is equal to pure paraffine for preserving the polished surface of iron and steel from oxidation. The paraffine should be warmed, rubbed on, and then wiped off with a woollen rag. It will not change the colour, whether bright or blue, and will protect the surface better than any varnish.

M. B. D.—The material for papier mache matrices now in general use in stereotyping daily newspapers is formed by taking a damp sheet of thick unsized paper and laying over it a number of sheets of moistened tissue paper until the whole is as thick as stout pasteboard. The under side, lightly covered with pulverised French chalk, is laid upon the face of a page of type and beaten with a stiff brush so as to force the soft paper into all the interstices of the type. Other sheets of adhesive paper are added until a sufficient thickness is attained. The whole is then covered with a woollen blanket and placed in a press, the bed of which is moderately heated and the press screwed down. The heat soon dries the matrix, which is removed from the type and placed in the casting-box and the melted metal poured in. The metal cools almost immediately, and the plate is taken out and trimmed, and the back planed down to the required thickness of the plate. The matrices are pliable, like cardboard, and may be used in a curved or flat casting-box. You can readily make a matrix by pasting the back of each sheet as it is laid on the form, and then placing another sheet on it until you have it of the required thickness. The paste should be smooth, and put on very lightly.

ROSEBELLE H., IDA D. S. and CONSTANCE W., three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Rosebelle H. is eighteen, short, dark hair, brown eyes, fond of home and music. Ida D. S. is seventeen, medium height, brown hair, gray eyes, fond of music and singing. Constance W. is nineteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing.

TOM and GEORGE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Tom is twenty-three, medium height, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. George is twenty-four, medium height, dark, brown hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-three, medium height, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

CHARLES and HARRY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Charles is twenty-one, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Harry is twenty, medium height, fair, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

S. B., a mechanic, twenty-three, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady between eighteen and twenty-two, medium height, good-looking, fond of home.

RICHER THAN GEMS OR GOLD.

I know I'm old and faded, Will,
And that my hair is grey;
I know that wrinkles on my brow
You've seen for many a day,
And that the brightness of my face
Has long since passed away.
Yet I have health and in my heart
I never have grown old;
The love I gave you years ago
I know can ne'er grow cold,
And your true love is richer, Will,
To me than gems or gold.

Marry, I too am far along
Life's journey, yet I see
As years go by the older love
Grows dearer ever to me;
Without your love to bless me now
I could not happy be.
Not for a day, but for all time
My heart is offered you,
And I took yours believing, wife,
It ever would be true;
And time has proved its faithfulness
And all its goodness too.

But I'm a plain old woman, Will,
And you still look so fine;
It makes me proud to gaze on you
And know that you are mine;
And I have ne'er regretted, Will,
That day in old lang syne,
When in the village church we stood
With happy hearts I trove,
And solemnly with hands clasped, Will,
Each took a sacred vow;
I thought that you were noble then,
I know that you are now.

You've been a faithful helpmeet, wife,
Through sorrow and through glee;
Of all earth's treasures you have proved
The dearest one to me;
And, wife, as long as life shall last
The same you e'er shall be.
You still are young in heart and mind:
True love can not grow cold,
Nor can it change like anything
That can be bought and sold;
So as I loved you in your youth
I'll love you now you're old.

C. D.

HARRY, twenty-four, tall, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be tall, fair, good-looking.

VERITAS, twenty-seven, would like to correspond with a young lady between eighteen and twenty-five.

OSCAR, TRUE BLUE and LAUGHING JOE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Oscar is eighteen, tall, fair, blue eyes, good-looking. True Blue is eighteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Laughing Joe is eighteen, tall, auburn hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between seventeen and eighteen, good-looking.

POLLY and KATE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen from twenty to twenty-five. Polly is eighteen, medium height, dark hair, brown eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music. Kate is twenty, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

A LONELY BIRDIE, eighteen, fair, would like to correspond with a young gentleman.

MILLIE, eighteen, tall, fair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty.

ROLLER, TURN OUT and FRED, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies about seventeen. Roller is twenty, short, fond of music. Turn Out is twenty, medium height. Fred is twenty.

WALTER, twenty-one, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady between seventeen and twenty-one with a view to matrimony.

PORTIUS and SPRING, two friends, would like to corre-

spond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Portius is tall, fair, of a loving disposition. Spring is dark, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

F. H., twenty-seven, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about sixteen.

SMILING WILL, LOVING JIM and DASHING MAT, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Smiling Will is twenty-one, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Loving Jim is twenty-three, tall, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Dashing Mat is twenty-one, medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes.

NELLIE and MATTIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Nellie is nineteen, medium height, auburn hair, hazel eyes. Mattie is twenty-four, brown hair, blue eyes.

ALICE and CHRISTY, two friends, would like to correspond with two tall, good-looking young gentlemen. Alice is seventeen, tall, fair, dark hair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and dancing. Christy is seventeen, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing.

LAVINA, eighteen, medium height, dark, brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a tall, dark, good-looking young gentleman.

VIOLET, seventeen, tall, brown hair, dark eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a tall, dark young gentleman.

MYRA, seventeen, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty or twenty-one, good-looking.

RUET, seventeen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty or twenty-one, tall, dark.

MADELINE, nineteen, short, brown hair, grey eyes, good-looking, fond of music, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-one, medium height, dark, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

HARRY is responded to by—N. H., seventeen, fair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of home and children. J. O'B. by—F. P., brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

LEAH by—Willie, twenty-two, tall, dark.

MINNIE by—John, twenty-four, medium height, fair.

LIEKE by—Richard, twenty-one.

SAM by—Agatha, twenty, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and singing.

DICK by—Edith, twenty, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

BON by—Blanche, nineteen, tall, dark, fond of dancing.

HARRY by—Lillian, nineteen, fair, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of music and singing.

ALTY SLOPER by—A. D., eighteen, tall, brown hair.

BLOOMER by—E. R., twenty.

CARRIE by—Edwin R., twenty.

ARTHUR W. by—Flo, medium height, dark, fond of home and dancing.

WILLIAM F. by—Vixen, tall, fair, fond of home and dancing.

A WIDOWER by—Annie D., twenty-nine, medium height, dark.

A WIDOWER by—A Widow, thirty, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

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N.B.—Correspondents must address their Letters to the Editor of the LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

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